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A

DEFENCE OF THE BAPTISTS,

OR, THE

BAPTISM OF BELIEVERS

BY

Immersion

THE ONLY BAPTISM OF THE

CHRISTIAN DISPENSATION:

BY

GEORGE GIBBS,

MINISTER OF THE BAPTIST CHURCH, ST. CLEMENT'S,

NORWICH.

NORWICH:

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1821.



TO THE
MEMBERS OF THE BAPTIST CHURCH AND CONGREGATION,
MEETING IN ST. CLEMENT'S, NORWICH.

I KNOW not to whom I can dedicate the following sheets, with so much propriety, or with such lively feelings of interest and respect, as to you my christian friends, at whose earnest and affectionate solicitation they are made public.

They contain the substance of four Sermons delivered to you previous to the administration of the ordinance of baptism; and while passing in review before me for the press, have been necessarily enlarged in consequence of arguments recently advanced by the Independents of this city. The diffidence I feel in thus appearing to public view, is in some degree obviated by the sanction of your authority, and the hope that my feeble attempt to defend the principles we maintain, will at least meet with your approbation.

If I have failed to bring forward new arguments, let it be remembered that this subject has been so repeatedly examined by able and experienced controversailists, that there is little scope left for the display of novelty. If, in

the warmth of my zeal for an important institution (almost sunk into contempt through the corruption of christianity), I have offended against the spirit or the precepts of that religion which teaches us to bear with the infirmities of the weak, I desire not to shelter myself under the protection of your name. My object in publishing at your request, is not to excite a contentious spirit about what some have denominated our *Shibboleth*, nor to weaken any bond of charity that unites the church of Christ, but to support a divine ordinance, and to vindicate our practice from those opprobrious charges which have been lately brought against it.

Let us, my friends, contend earnestly for the authority of Christ in his positive institutions, as well as for that form of doctrine once delivered to the saints—and let us be careful in our practice to regard the law of his commandments, as well as to embody the spirit of his precepts in our lives.

Wishing you grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ,

I am your willing Servant in the Gospel,

GEORGE GIBBS.

NORWICH,
JULY 9, 1821.



MATT. XXVIII. 18, 19, 20.

AND JESUS CAME AND SPAKE UNTO THEM, SAYING, ALL POWER IS GIVEN UNTO ME IN HEAVEN AND IN EARTH. GO YE, THEREFORE, AND TEACH ALL NATIONS, BAPTISING THEM IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON, AND OF THE HOLY GHOST; TEACHING THEM TO OBSERVE ALL THINGS WHATSOEVER I HAVE COMMANDED YOU: AND, LO, I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS, EVEN UNTO THE END OF THE WORLD.—AMEN.

THESE words, which contain our Lord's commission, were addressed by *Him* to his apostles just before he ascended into heaven to take possession of his mediatorial kingdom. They exhibit the nature of his government, the terms of admission into his church, and the very important part his apostles were to take in its establishment, by preaching the Gospel among all nations. Jesus had appeared unto them three several times, accompanied by those demonstrations of power that convinced them of his divine authority, and animated them in the prospect of their arduous undertaking; for he furnished them with satisfactory evidence of his

resurrection, confirmed their faith in Him as the true Messiah, and having delivered to them his final commands, He was received up into heaven.

As our Lord's commission was the authority by which the apostles acted in the affairs of his kingdom, and especially in the formation of the first churches, it ought to be our guide at the present day, since the spirit of it remains *unrepealed*: "See that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount" (*Heb. viii. 5.*) was the command given to Moses the minister of the law; and ministers of the gospel should be equally careful to do all things according to the order of Christ's commission delivered on the mount, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you".

By this commission the apostles were authorized to go into all the world to preach the gospel; they were to preach it as the means of converting men to the faith of Christ, they were to baptise *those who believed*, in the name of the sacred Three, and they were to instruct these baptised believers to observe the commandments and ordinances of the Saviour. In the *order* of the commission, and in the manner the

apostles executed it, preaching preceded faith, and faith preceded baptism; hence the first churches of the christian dispensation were composed of baptised believers; nor does it appear that any persons, during the apostolic age, were partakers of baptism and church fellowship except those who professed faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

As we are about to administer an ordinance which, in the purest ages of the christian church, belonged exclusively to believers in Christ; and as our mode of administration differs so widely from that of various denominations of British christians, it is needful that we should explain and defend both our opinion and our practice. For this purpose we call your attention to the important passage before us. In Matthew, the words of the commission are, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them"; and in Mark, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature". The one is illustrated by the other; when Matthew uses the term, "teach all nations", Mark uses the phrase, "preach the gospel to every creature": thus are we informed *how* the nations are to be taught, which is by the preaching of the gospel.

The phrase *μαθητεύσατε πάντα τὰ ἔθνη*, used by Matthew, might have been rendered, *make disciples among all nations*. In doing which three

things were enjoined upon the apostles ; *first*, they were to preach the gospel with a view to the conversion of sinners unto God ; *secondly*, they were to introduce the converted into the church by baptism ; *thirdly*, they were to instruct these baptised persons in all the duties of the christian profession. This is so obviously and strictly the meaning of the passage, that it is acknowledged by most critical expositors.

Dr. Doddridge says : “ I render the word *μαθητεύσατε*, *proselyte*, that it may be duly distinguished from *διδάσκοντες*, *teaching*, (in the next verse) with which our version confounds it. The former seems to import instruction in the essentials of religion, which it was necessary adult persons should know and submit to, before they could regularly be admitted to baptism ; the latter may relate to those more particular admonitions in regard to christian faith and practice”.—see *Fam. Exp. in loc.*

Dr. Whitby : “ *μαθητεύειν*, here, is to preach the gospel to all nations, and to engage them to believe it, in order to their profession of that faith by baptism ; as seems apparent, *first*, from that parallel commission, Mark xvi. 15. “Go preach the gospel to every creature ; he that believeth and is baptised shall be saved” : *secondly*, from the scripture notion of a disciple, that being still the same as a believer. If here it should be said that I yielded too much

to the Antipædobaptists, by saying, that to be made disciples here, is to be taught to believe in Christ that so they might be his disciples ; I desire any one to tell me how the apostles could μαθητεύειν, make a disciple of an heathen, or unbelieving Jew, without being μαθηται, or teachers of them ; whether they were not sent to preach to those that could hear, and to teach them to whom they preached that Jesus was the Christ, and only to baptise them when they did believe this".—see *Comment. in loc.*

Grotius : “ Since there are two ways of teaching, the one, by introduction to the first principles—the other, by more extensive instruction : the former seems to be intended by μαθητεύειν, for that is, as it were, to bring into discipline, and is to precede baptism ; the latter, is pointed out by διδάσκειν, which is to follow baptism”.—see *Annot. in loc.*

Mr. Poole’s continuators : “ Go ye therefore and teach all nations”. The Greek is μαθητεύσατε, make disciples all nations ; but that must be by preaching, and instructing them in the principles of the christian faith ; and Mark expounds it, telling us our Saviour said, Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature ; that is, to every reasonable creature capable of hearing and receiving it. I cannot be of their mind, who think that persons may be baptised before they be taught : we want pre-

cedents of any such baptism in scripture; though indeed we find precedents of persons baptised, who had but a small degree of the knowledge of the gospel; but it should seem that they were all first taught that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, and were not baptised till they professed such belief (*Act. viii. 37*); and John baptised them in Jordan confessing their sins", *Matt. iii. 6*.—see *Annot in loc.*

Bishop Burnet observes: "The institution of baptism, as it is a federal act of the christian religion, must be taken from the commission that our Saviour gave to his disciples; to go preach and make disciples to *him* in all nations, (for that is the strict signification of the word,) baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. By the first teaching or making disciples, that must go before baptism, is to be meant the convincing the world, that Jesus is the Christ, the true Messiah, anointed of God, with a fullness of grace and of the spirit without measure; and sent to be the Saviour and Redeemer of the world. And when any were brought to acknowledge this, then they were to baptise them, to initiate them into this religion, by obliging them to renounce all idolatry and ungodliness, as well as all carnal and secular lusts, and then they led them into the

water ; and with no other garments but what might cover nature, they at first laid them down in the water, as a man is laid in the grave, and then they said these words, I baptise or wash thee in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost : then they raised them up again, and clean garments were put on them : from whence came the phrase of being baptised into Christ's death, of being buried with him by baptism into death : of our being risen with Christ, and of our putting on the Lord Jesus Christ ; of putting off the old man, and putting on the new".—see *Exp. Art. 27.*

Venema : " Go, says our Lord to the Apostles, teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. This is an excellent passage, and explains the whole nature of baptism. Before persons were baptised, it was necessary for them to believe the preaching of the apostles, which faith they were to profess in baptism. For the word *μαθητεύειν*, in the style of the New Testament, does not signify barely to admit into a school and instruction, but to admit after the doctrine is believed, and after a previous subjection to the fundamental laws of the school : *μαθητεύειν τινα*, is to teach a person effectually, so that he may learn, obey and receive the doctrine by faith. It includes

therefore, to hear, understand and to admit for true".—see *Booth's Pædobap. exam.*

Baxter: "Go disciple me all nations, baptising them. As for those that say they are disciplined by baptism, and not before baptism, they speak not the sense of that text, nor that which is true or rational, if they mean it as absolutely spoken. This is not like some occasional historical mention of baptism, but it is the very commission of Christ to his apostles, for preaching, and baptising, and purposely expresseth their several works, in their several places and order. Their first task is by teaching to make disciples, who are by Mark called believers—their second work is to baptise them, whereto is annexed the promise of their salvation—the third work is to teach them all other things which are afterward to be learned in the school of Christ. To contemn this order is to renounce all rules of order; for where can we expect to find it, if not here?"—see *Booth's Pædobap. exam.*

The above quotations from the writings of some of the most eminent and learned pædobaptist divines, plainly prove their agreement with us, that the word *μαθητεύειν*, signifies to make disciples by convincing men of the truth of christianity, and bringing them over to the faith of Jesus—it is not baptism that makes disciples, but instruction in the doctrines of the gospel.

Baptism is the outward ceremony by which we testify our faith in Christ, and our willingness to submit to his authority. The command says, “teach and baptise”, not “baptise and teach”; or what is too frequently the case, baptise children in their infancy, and omit to teach them when they come to years of understanding. This explanation of our Lord’s commission is supported by the testimony of the early christian fathers, by the most learned expositors of modern times, and what is of infinitely higher importance, by the whole authority and analogy of the sacred scriptures.

Before we proceed in the investigation of this subject, we shall lay down two propositions; *first*, that the word of God is the only rule of faith and practice in matters of religion; *secondly*, that what is not there commanded is not binding upon the consciences of men. These are the principles upon which we wish to act, and it is by these principles we desire that others should judge of our conduct.

First. We believe the bible to be the only infallible guide in matters of religion, because it comes with divine authority, “thus saith the Lord”; and therefore we believe that all the commandments and ordinances of Christ should be observed both in their spirit and letter, with a fidelity proportionate to their high importance.

The bible, and the bible alone, is the religion of protestant dissenters : the magna charta of non-conformity. Animated by its sacred spirit, and guided by its unerring truth, our forefathers successfully resisted that spiritual usurpation and priestly domination, which was destructive of civil and religious liberty ; and we, acting under the direction of the same divine records, baptise adults by immersion, on a profession of their faith in Christ. We adopt this plan, because it was the uniform practice of the apostles and first ministers of the gospel : thus they understood and obeyed the commission of their risen Lord, and the churches which they formed were composed exclusively of persons of this description.

Secondly. We believe that what is not commanded in the word of God, is not binding upon the consciences of men. As nothing should be excluded from the worship of God which Christ hath appointed, so nothing should be added by human authority ; He alone, as legislator of his own kingdom, can alter or annul what He hath himself commanded—to interfere with the economy of things established in his church, is to be wise above what is written, and to invade the prerogative of *his* office, who is “ head over all things to his church, which is his body, the fulness of Him who filleth all in all.”

Believing then that the doctrines of men are of no authority in the church of Christ, we reject them as derogatory from the glory of the Saviour, and injurious to the interests of pure and undefiled religion : but we know that the spirit, which in very early times introduced innovation and will-worship, is gratifying to the depraved principles of human nature ; and from this source has arisen that mass of error which has beclouded the moral hemisphere of Europe, which tends to destroy the vital religion of all national establishments, and which must eventually work their overthrow. Let those churches who profess to hold the faith once delivered to the saints, be upon their guard how they receive for doctrines of divine appointment, the commandments and traditions of men ; lest by entangling themselves with the carnal ceremonies of antichristian churches, they imbibe their spirit and share in their final ruin.

Acting under the influence of these sentiments, we not only dissent from the established church in points of discipline, but we differ from all pædobaptists, whether of the hierarchy or among the dissenters, on the subject of infant sprinkling ; and we believe they are alike erroneous respecting the nature and design of christian baptism.

In considering the words of our text, we

shall inquire into the NATURE, MODE, SUBJECTS, and DESIGN of BAPTISM, as they appear in the New Testament.

First, we shall inquire into the NATURE OF BAPTISM.

In considering the *nature of christian baptism*, we shall begin with its origin, and shew that it is an ordinance of divine appointment, and not a Jewish or Heathen rite introduced into the gospel dispensation.

The first instance in which this ordinance as a public profession of personal religion is spoken of in the sacred writings, is in the New Testament, where it stands in immediate connexion with the introduction of the gospel. . . “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God, John did baptise in the wilderness and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; and there went out unto him all the land of Judea and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptised of him in the river of Jordan confessing their sins”.—Mark i. 44, 45.

That there were divers washings under the law, no one will dispute, and from this acknowledged fact, some have inferred that the baptism which Christ enjoined, was a rite in frequent practice among his countrymen, and being well adapted to the simplicity and purity of that order of things which he was about to introduce, he retained it as a ceremony of his dis-

penation: but if we examine the divers baptisms practised by the Jews, we shall find no analogy between any of them, and the baptism of the New Testament.

The Jewish washings were appointed on account of ceremonial defilement and pertained to *things* as well as *persons*; we read of the washing of cups, and pots, and brazen vessels, and garments; and these washings are called baptisms by Mark. There was also the ceremonial baptism or washing of persons; as of the priests, the lepers, and those who had contracted any ceremonial impurity: but in those washings which were to be repeated as often as fresh defilement was incurred, there was no administrator, no profession of faith, no baptising in the name of the God of Abraham, nor of the promised Messiah, nor of any person whatever; nor is there one point of agreement between the washings under the law, and the baptism under the gospel, except the mere circumstance of the use of water. Surely it will be allowed by every candid inquirer that this is not a sufficient ground for the supposition that Christ borrowed his ordinance from any preceding rite.

It has been asserted that christian baptism was borrowed from Jewish proselyte baptism. Where is this proselyte baptism to be found? Not in the old Testament, for though we read of persons who undoubtedly were proselytes,

as the Shechemites in the time of Jacob, Jethro the father-in-law of Moses, Rahab and Ruth, yet not a word is said of their being baptised; it is not to be found in the apocrypha—and though Christ adverts in the New Testament to the zeal of the Jews in making proselytes, no mention is made of their being baptised. Neither Philo nor Josephus, two celebrated Jewish writers, notice any such rite as practised by their countrymen; nor is it referred to by any of the fathers of the first three centuries. The silence of such authorities is a strong proof against the existence of the ceremony in the apostolic age, and it is the opinion of some of the most learned pædobaptists, that there is no evidence that proselyte baptism was practised by the Jews till after the destruction of their city: they allow that the earliest account of it is in those labyrinths of error, the talmudical and Rabbinical writings. Of this opinion were Owen, Jennings and Knatchbull at home—Venema, Vitringa, Carpzovius and Wernsdorfius, abroad; all pædobaptists.

Dr. Owen, when speaking of the ceremony of washing among the Jews, says; “From this latter institution which was temporary and occasional, (and of this kind they had many granted to them, whilst they were in the wilderness before the giving of the law,) the Rabbins have framed a baptism for those that enter into their

synagogue ; a fancy too greedily embraced by some christian writers, who would have the holy ordinance of the church's baptism to be derived from thence. Nor are there the least footsteps of any such usage amongst the Jews until after the days of John the baptist, in imitation of whom it was first taken up by some anti-mishnical Rabbins". (*See Exercit. 19. 35.*) And again, "The institution of the rite of baptism is no where mentioned in the old Testament. There is no example of it in those ancient records, nor was it ever used in the admission of proselytes, while the Jewish church continued. No mention of it occurs in Philo, in Josephus, in Jesus the Son of Syrach, nor in the evangelical history. This Rabbinical opinion therefore owes its rise to the Taunerae or anti-mishnical doctors after the destruction of their city. The opinion of some learned men therefore about the transferring of a Jewish baptismal rite, (which in reality did not then exist) by the Lord Jesus for the use of his disciples is destitute of all probability."—*see Theologoumena. Lib. 5. Digress. 4.*

Dr. Jennings observes : " But after all, it remains to be proved, not only that christian baptism was instituted in the room of Jewish proselyte baptism, but that the Jews had any such baptism in our Saviour's time. The earliest accounts we have of it are in the Mishna

and Gemera, the former compiled, as the Jews assert, by Rabbi Juda in the second century, though learned men in general bring it several centuries lower; the latter not till the seventh century. There is not a word of it in Philo, nor yet in Josephus, though he gives an account of the proselyting of the Idumeans by Hyrcanus. Indeed on this occasion he mentions only circumcision as the rite of initiation, and saith that upon receiving this rite and living according to the Jewish law, they from that time became Jews. And notwithstanding he speaks of John's baptism, yet it is under a very different notion from the proselyte baptism spoken of by the mishnical Rabbins". (*See Jewish Ant. B. 1. c. iii. p. 136.*) And again, page 138: "Upon the whole it is more likely the Jews took the hint of proselyte baptism from the christians after our Saviour's time, than that *He* borrowed his baptism from theirs, which, whenever it came into practice, was one of those additions to the law of God, which *He* severely censures. However that may be, there wants more evidence of its being as ancient as our Saviour's time, than I apprehend can be produced, to ground any argument upon it in relation to christian baptism".

Dr. Benson, another eminent pædobaptist says: "I have not in the old Testament found any instance of one person's washing another by

way of consecration, purification, or sanctification : except that of Moses, his washing Aaron and his sons when he set them apart unto the office of priests. (*Lev. viii. 6.*) I cannot find that the Jews do at present practice any such thing as that of baptising the proselytes that go over to them, though they are said to make them wash themselves. Where is there any intimation of such a practice among the Jews before the coming of our Lord ? If any one could produce any clear testimony of that kind from the old Testament, the apocrypha, Josephus, or Philo, that would be of great moment. In former times proselytes coming over from Heathenism to the Jewish religion used to wash themselves ; which is a very different thing from baptism, or persons being washed by another. I do not absolutely deny that the Jews initiated proselytes by baptism, but I mention these difficulties and objections with regard to the fact". See *Paraphrase and Notes on Epist. of Paul, p. 641, 642. second edit.*

But notwithstanding the powerful arguments adduced against this opinion by some of the most eminent pædobaptist writers ; if Jewish proselyte baptism is to be the foundation of christian baptism, it is most certain that the latter ought not to be administered by sprinkling, since the Jews required their proselytes, whether men, women or children, to dip them-

selves—this is allowed on all hands. Maimonides, who wrote in the twelfth century, says ; “ There must be water sufficient for the dipping of the whole body of a man at once, and such the wise men reckon to be a cubit square, and three cubits in depth”. And again : “ Wherever washing of the flesh, and washing of clothes are mentioned in the law, nothing else is meant but the dipping of the whole body in a confluence of water, and that if he dip his whole body except the tip of his little finger he is still in his uncleanness : and that all unclean persons who are dipped in their clothes, their dipping is right, because the waters penetrate to them, not being separated by their clothes”.

The divine origin of New Testament baptism, is I think clearly proved by the questions which were put, first, by the Priests and Levites to John, and secondly, by Christ to the chief Priests and Elders respecting John’s baptism. We are told, that “ The Jews sent Priests and Levites from Jerusalem to John, saying, Who art thou? And he confessed and denied not, but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, Who then, art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? and he answered, no. Then said they unto him, Who art thou, that we may give an answer to them that sent us, what sayest thou of thyself? Now they who were sent were of the Pharisees;

and they asked him and said unto him, why baptisest thou? If thou be not that Christ, &c. &c.” From this passage it is evident that a considerable sensation had been produced among the inhabitants of Jerusalem, by a report that some remarkable person was baptising in the wilderness of Judea, and that they sent Priests and Levites to ascertain who he was, and what were his claims. The Jews universally were looking for that prophet whose coming had been foretold by Moses, and who, according to general expectation, was to effect a great change in their political and ecclesiastical condition; when therefore they heard that John administered a rite so truly original, they sent to know who this person could be; and when he confessed that he was not Elias, nor that prophet, they immediately said, Why baptisest thou? Where are your credentials for introducing and practising this new ceremony?

Now if proselyte baptism had been so common a thing among the Jews, as some suppose, can it be imagined that the inhabitants of Jerusalem would have been surprised at hearing that John was baptising in the wilderness—or that they would have sent Priests and Levites, to inquire of him who he was—or that these Priests, who also were Pharisees, and of course well acquainted with the laws and customs of the Jews, would, upon seeing him

baptise, ask him if he were the Christ, or that great Prophet expected by all Israel? No; it is evident from these very circumstances, that the ordinance of baptism, was an innovation; the novelty of which, led these people to suspect that it might be one of the rites of that new dispensation of things which was to attend the introduction of Messiah's kingdom, then so generally expected.

Again: Our Lord's question to the chief priests and Elders, pleads strongly for the divine authority of John's Baptism. "The baptism of John, whence was it, from heaven or of men? And they reasoned among themselves, saying, if we shall say from heaven, He will say unto us, why did ye not then believe him? But if we shall say of men, we fear the people, for all men hold John as a Prophet. And they answered Jesus and said, we cannot tell". Now had the baptism of John been borrowed from any similar rite existing among the Jews, the priests would have been at no loss to have answered our Lord's inquiry; they might have said with justice, it is taken from the traditions of the Elders—nor need they have feared the indignation of the people, in openly declaring a circumstance which must have been well known to the Jews, and highly gratifying to their national vanity: that they did not so reply is an unanswerable argument against the opinion

that proselyte baptism prevailed among the Jews in the days of Christ ; and because they had no such plea, they were silent, for they did not choose to condemn themselves for not believing the testimony of one, whose message and ordinance were of divine appointment.

Secondly, we shall shew that baptism is a positive duty binding upon all who profess faith in Jesus Christ.

The duties which christianity enjoins upon its disciples are classed under two heads ; moral and positive. The former arise from the moral relation or fitness of things, and approve themselves to the consciences of all intellectual beings ; the latter, are founded upon an express command, and derive their obligation from the authority by which they are enforced : such are the two ordinances of the christian church—baptism and the Lord's supper.

To love God with all our heart and our neighbour as ourselves are moral duties, originating in our relation to God and man ; and cannot be violated without dishonoring the divine character and disturbing the laws of social order and happiness : but positive duties have a very different aspect—they do not arise from the moral relations of men, nor are they discoverable by the light of reason. Emanating from the sovereign will of the legislator, they must of necessity be revealed before they can

be known, and when known, they demand obedience from those only of whom they are required. The authority of moral duties is universal and immutable, while the influence of positive duties is of a particular and temporary nature.

Thus to do justice, and to love mercy, are moral duties binding upon all men ; but to offer a lamb of a year old for sacrifice, to circumcise a male child on the eighth day, to dip seven times in the river Jordan, were positive duties : the propriety of which would never have been known without an immediate revelation, and the obligation to perform which rested with those only of whom they were required. The command given to Abraham to take his son, his only son Isaac, and to offer him up for a burnt offering upon Mount Moriah, obliged him to obey that extraordinary injunction. So likewise those precepts of a more general nature which were given to the Israelites, as circumcision and the passover, imposed upon that people the obligation to observe them with fidelity through all their generations. But these laws were not binding upon the surrounding nations lying in heathen darkness, nor did they incur the threatened penalty by not observing them, since they were given to the Israelites as the people whom God had chosen, and they were required of those only who worshipped Jehovah

the God of Israel. Had an Israelite been asked why he circumcised at all? why he circumcised only his male children? why he circumcised them on the eighth day?—or concerning the passover why he killed a lamb? why he sprinkled the blood upon the posts of his door? why he eat the flesh roasted with fire, with unleavened bread and bitter herbs? he would have answered immediately, “these are the ordinances which Jehovah hath commanded us to observe through all our generations.

Upon the introduction of christianity a new order of things took place, in which the moral purity of the Mosaic dispensation was preserved, while its ceremonial rites were superseded by ordinances less burthensome indeed, but not less obligatory. Baptism is one of these ordinances. It is founded upon the command of God, and cannot be neglected without incurring his displeasure. The law of the case is simple, yet positive: every thing is expressed with clearness and nothing is left to the judgment or pleasure of the administrator.

As the authority of new Testament ordinances consists in their being instituted by a divine command, so the validity of them depends upon their being administered according to the rules laid down in the command. To depart from the *law* of an institution, is to depart from the institution itself, and to administer a rite of our

own in the room of that which God has ordained. Had an Israelite presumed to deviate from the rules given respecting the passover—had he chosen to sprinkle the blood upon the floor rather than upon the door posts—to boil the lamb instead of roasting it—to eat it with sweet instead of bitter herbs—he would not have kept the Lord's passover, but a rite of his own and in so doing he would have incurred the divine displeasure.

In the celebration of the Lord's Supper, Christ has ordained that bread and wine should be taken in remembrance of him. Should any society of christians substitute water for wine, or meat for bread; such a ceremony, though *they* might call it the Lord's supper, would bear no relation to the institution appointed by the redeemer, nor would it be an ordinance of the New Testament: so likewise baptism *to be valid* must be performed agreeably to the *law* of the institution. The subjects as well as the mode must accord with the precept and practice of the New Testament; to alter either of these is to perform a new rite, and not the one which Christ has ordained.

Had our Lord commanded us to sprinkle infants, it would be our duty to do it, and it would be a direct violation of his law to change either the mode or the subject: but he has not given such a command, and therefore we reject

infant sprinkling as an ordinance of men. To plead for this practice as some do on the ground that what is not prohibited, is lawful, is to open a wide door indeed for the admission of human inventions into the worship of God. It is by this negative mode of reasoning that papists defend the use of the wafer, the crucifix, the holy water, &c. &c., and episcopalians those numerous ceremonies once so burdensome to the consciences of non-conformists. Surely every rite practised in the christian church should be founded upon an express divine command; and what is not supported by a new Testament statute is of men and not of God.

Should it be asked why we baptise at all? why we baptise believers only? why we baptise by immersion? why we receive the baptised into the church to teach them the way of God more perfectly? we reply because such is the command of Christ, and such was the practice of the apostles. Ministers are first to preach the gospel—they are then to baptise those who make a credible profession of faith—and they are to instruct those whom they baptise in the doctrines of Christ's kingdom—*διδάσκοντες αὐτοὺς τηρεῖν πάντα* teaching them to observe with all diligence and fidelity, the commandments of our saviour. *Τηρεῖν* signifies to observe with care, or to keep with diligence and fidelity—thus Matt. xxiii. 3. “ All therefore whatsoever they bid

you *τηρειν* observe, *τηρειτε και ποιειτε*; *that observe, and do*". See also Matt. xix. 17, and John xv. 10, and xvii. 6, in which places the word signifies to *keep the commandments of God*. When therefore we read that Christ commanded the apostles to teach those whom they baptised to observe his precepts, we naturally conclude that they were capable of understanding and practising the things commanded.

When we consider the decided manner in which the scriptures speak of believer's baptism, it is surprising that any persons professing to teach christianity, should be so ignorant or so prejudiced, as to assert, that the "Baptists have not in scripture either precept, pattern, precedent or example to rest upon", and to boast of attempting "*to put them and their system out of the bible*". What is there in *our system* that is opposed to the purity and honour of religion, that we should be thus threatened with expulsion? we preach repentance and remission of sins in the name of the Lord Jesus, for so we are commanded Luke xxiv. 47. We baptise those who do repent and believe the gospel agreeably to the injunction in Mark xvi. 16. We baptise them by immersion, because such was the practice of the first administrators of the ordinance; Matt. iii. 6, John iii. 22, 23, Acts viii. 36, 39. And yet our opponents declare that we have neither precept, pattern nor

example in the bible for our practice".—in plain language, that there is no command to baptise believers, nor any instance of persons being baptised on a profession of faith in the new Testament. But we ask, did not our Lord command the apostles to baptise those who believed? Did not Peter call upon the Jews who were converted through his ministry to be baptised, and did they not immediately receive this ordinance? Was not Ananias sent with a divine command to Saul bidding him to arise and be baptised, and did he not immediately obey? If these things are so, (and who can deny them?) what becomes of the charge so confidently brought against us?

Can the Pædobaptists produce such authority for the sprinkling of babes? Can they produce *any* plain testimony from scripture? *If they can*, why do they not furnish us with one express command, one solitary example in support of this rite? Bishop Burnet, Wall, Fuller, Palmer, and many more pædobaptists, confess that there is neither precept, rule, nor example in the new Testament for *infant baptism*. Why then do *modern* pædobaptists assume this high tone and accuse us of unscriptural conduct? They must forget surely that their practice of sprinkling unconscious babes has been allowed by their own partizans to be without new Testament authority, to be derived

from tradition, to be inferred from an old Testament ordinance, and to be practised on the ground of expediency.

Whatever differences of opinion may exist among the baptists on *other* points of doctrine, they are all agreed that baptism is founded upon a positive divine law, and is binding on believers only; and we challenge our opponents to disprove this statement from scriptural testimony: nor are there wanting many in communion with independent churches, who are compelled to acknowledge that we are right; yet from motives of policy or self-indulgence, they decline to follow the Lord through this despised ordinance. The number of *these dry baptists*, as they may be called, is by no means inconsiderable, they are to be found in almost all societies of professing christians, and we not unfrequently hear them vindicate their neglect of an institution, which their judgements approve, on the ground that *it is a non-essential—a ceremony of very minor importance*—and that *they can be saved without it*. To such we reply that there are no non-essentials in the religion of Jesus, for though baptism is not necessary to salvation, it is essential to that perfect obedience to the will of Christ, which recognises *his* authority, nor can that be trivial and unimportant which he instituted and sanctioned by his example.

Thirdly, in further considering the nature of baptism, we observe that it is an ordinance of initiation.

We do not mean by this expression that baptism makes a person partaker of those spiritual blessings which accompany regeneration, for he is supposed to be regenerated before he is baptised; nor do we believe that a man is more fit for church-membership after baptism than he was before, in consequence of his receiving any moral or spiritual qualification by attending to this ordinance: but we believe that it is a rite by which believers publicly profess their renunciation of the world, and their subjection to the authority of Christ; and that all who thus acknowledged Him, were received into the church in the days of the apostles. “Then they that gladly received his word were baptised; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostle’s doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers”.—see *Acts* ii. 41, 42.

This was a public authoritative illustration of our Lord’s commission. It took place at Jerusalem, when the apostles and disciples were assembled to the number of about one hundred and twenty, and was the act of *that body* whose conduct was to form a precedent of the highest authority to the ministers and churches of Christ

in future ages ; we therefore inquire what the apostles did with those persons whom they baptised ? The scriptures inform us that they received them into communion with the church. Here then we perceive that the baptism of believers possesses a positive significance, that it has a close relation to the external privileges of the church : but the sprinkling of infants among dissenters, as far as we can ascertain, is attended with neither external nor internal religious benefit. The supposition that any spiritual blessing is conveyed by baptism, cannot be supported without allowing the popish doctrine of baptismal regeneration ; determinately as we reject this hydra-headed dogma of anti-christian superstition, we fear it is more deeply entrenched in the theological system of pædobaptists than they are willing to confess—and they must pardon us if we suspect them on this ground. How can we do otherwise, when we hear so many of them talk so gravely of putting their children into covenant by baptism ?

Viewing baptism as an initiatory ordinance, by which those that receive it publicly acknowledge themselves the disciples of Christ, and are recognized as such by the church, let us inquire how the case stands in relation to the infants of pædobaptist dissenters.

The pædobaptists in England may be ranked under three classes ; papists, episcopalians, and

dissenters, and these all hold baptism to be an ordinance of initiation.

The church of Rome says: "Sin, whether contracted by birth from our first parents, or committed of ourselves, by the admirable virtue of this sacrament (baptism), is remitted and pardoned; by baptism we are joined and knit to Christ as members to the head; by baptism we are signed with a character which can never be blotted out of our souls; it opens to every one of us the gate of heaven". Dr. Milner, a popish dignitary, when comparing the church of Rome and the church of England together in reference to their ordinances, in his letters on the sacraments, says, "Look on the other hand at the Catholic church; you will find the same importance still attached to this sacred rite (baptism) on the part of the people and the clergy, which is observable in the acts of the apostles, and in the writings of the holy fathers; the former being ever impatient to have their children baptised, the latter equally solicitous to administer in due time, and with the most scrupulous exactness: thus as matters stand now, the two churches are not upon a level with respect to this first and common mean of sanctification—the members of one have a much greater moral certainty of the remission of that sin in which we are all born, and of their having been heretofore actually received into the

church of Christ, than the members of the other have".—page 53, part 2.

Here regeneration, sanctification, union to Christ, and eternal life are all represented as flowing from infant baptism.

The church of England declares that "by baptism the subject is made a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven."—This is coming very near to the declaration of the church of Rome. *First*, the child baptised is said to be made "a member of Christ," which denotes personal union to the Saviour. *Secondly*, he is called "a child of God," and is said to be regenerated; *thirdly*, he is styled "an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven," and all this in virtue of his baptism—so says the church of England, and so she believes, and in consequence refuses what she is pleased to denominate christian burial to all children who have not been baptised.

Pædobaptist dissenters say that *baptism puts the child into the covenant*—thus good Mr. Henry—"The Gospel contains not only a doctrine, but a covenant, and by baptism we are brought into that covenant;" and Mr. Horsey says, "We being baptised are regularly admitted into the christian dispensation."

Mr. Geo. Clayton says, "Such full assurance of hope have I in the *efficacy of this sacrament* (infant sprinkling), that I doubt not but it will

appear in that day when the secrets of divine operation shall be disclosed, that the seeds and principles of the better life were in some instances infused into the mind at the very hour when baptismal water was externally applied in the name of the Father.”

Dr. Williams says, “was I baptised in infancy? then have I an additional incentive to gratitude; for from that *early* period has pardon of sin, free salvation, eternal life, with every new covenant blessing been *sealed* to me.” “I was then added to the church, *that I might be saved*. I was then constituted a visible member of Christ, *that I might be conformed to Him*. I was then put in the way I should go, that, when grown up, *I might not depart from it*. I was then visibly ingrafted into Christ, that I might bring forth much fruit, and thus be found his approved disciple.” “From a state of distance I was brought *near*. From a stranger I was made a *fellow-citizen* with the saints, and of the household of God.” (*Antipædobaptism exam. vol. ii. pp. 299, 300, 301.*)

So say the independents—so say the episcopalians—and so says the church of Rome! They all unite in ascribing grace and salvation to infant baptism, they all rally round this ceremony which is the pillar of popery and the prop of that stupendous system of will-worship

which has so long opposed the progress of divine truth.

But let us ask, *into what covenant* are infants introduced by baptism? *That* which is called in the New Testament, "*The old covenant*," (see *Heb.* viii. 13.) was external, national, and temporary; it belonged to the Jews and their infant offspring, was a yoke of bondage, and has long since been abolished. *The new covenant* is peculiar to the christian church, and is that covenant of grace which is "ordered in all things, and sure" with respect to its subjects as well as its blessings; both being chosen and appointed of God himself—*Is this the covenant* into which infants are introduced by baptism?

Again, *What infants* are brought into this covenant? *are all?* this seems to be implied in those cases where all are baptised—or *only* the infants of believing parents? If so, why baptise the children of unbelievers, and give to them the sign and the seal of a covenant to which their parents are avowed strangers? But *are all the infants of believers* in the covenant? If this is contended for, and their right to baptism inferred from thence, how does this correspond with after circumstances.

Again, *how come they into this covenant?* Is it by natural descent, as the offspring of believing parents? Are they born in it as the children of the Jews were born in the Abra-

hamic covenant? *If so*, do we not maintain that persons are christians by natural generation—a position at awful variance with the testimony of divine revelation, which declares, that *every child of Adam* is conceived in sin and shapen in iniquity; and says of the *true children* of the covenant, that “*they* are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

Or, are they actually put into this covenant by baptism? Do the few drops of water sprinkled upon the face of the child bring him into covenant-relation with God? We read (*Heb. viii. 8.*) that it is the prerogative of God himself to enter into covenant with his people; but upon this principle it is made to be the work of man: or does the Holy Ghost introduce the child into this covenant when he is sprinkled? *In how many instances* then, does he forsake the work of his own hand, and leave the *covenant infant* an everlasting stranger to covenant blessings!

Again, as admission into this covenant necessarily supposes the enjoyment of certain privileges, let us inquire what are the peculiar benefits resulting to the children of pædobaptist dissenters by virtue of their baptism? Those who were baptised by the Apostles were admitted to the privileges of the church—does this consequence follow the baptism of

infants by dissenters?—certainly not. Are they holier than other children? are their understandings more enlightened, their wills better regulated, their affections more sanctified? the many awful instances of degeneracy and depravity in children who have been duly baptised in infancy loudly answer, no! Do pædobaptist dissenters receive any into their communion upon the mere circumstance of their having been baptised in infancy? does any man plead his baptism when an infant—as a sufficient ground for his admission to the communion of the saints?

By the church of Rome and by the church of England, baptised infants are declared to be members of those communities, and have an undisputed right to all church privileges; this is rational, and accords with the professed principle that baptism regenerates its subject; hence confirmation, church-membership, pious death, christian burial, and assumed glorious resurrection, all follow upon baptism as the procuring cause: but what external or internal benefit do the children of dissenting parents enjoy by baptism, and *what is the nature of that covenant* into which they are said to be introduced?

We come then to the unavoidable conclusion, that pædobaptist dissenters, to be consistent with themselves, ought to admit infants to

communion; indeed there are many of them who feel the force of our statement, that to consider children proper subjects for baptism, and to deny that they are fit for church-membership, is a paradox not to be reconciled upon the principles of reason or revelation.

If we look back to the earliest ages of the christian church, we shall find that baptism and the Lord's supper were concomitant ordinances; that the persons who received the former were always admitted to the latter—and in after times, when infant baptism crept into the church, the great patrons of that unscriptural rite, Cyprian, Jerom, Austin, and Pope Innocent, were strenuous for infant communion, because they saw that both ordinances were equally important; and that if infants were fit subjects for the one, they were worthy partakers of the other. This conviction actually led to infant communion, which prevailed in the Latin church during several centuries, and is practised in the Greek church to the present day; and it ought certainly to be observed in every church that admits of infant baptism, for are not the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper commanded by the same authority, are they not of the same religious importance, are they not the standing institutions of the Gospel system, and equally required of those who enter into the visible church?

If infants are really, *as it is said they are*, taken into covenant by baptism, *why not* bring them to the Lord's table? if it be replied that by reason of their tender age they cannot discern the Lord's body, nor partake of the elements in remembrance of him, *this very objection we make to their being baptised*; they cannot exercise faith and repentance, which are required of all who receive baptism, and without which no one has a right to the ordinance: "He that *believeth* and is baptised shall be saved." "*If thou believest* with all thine heart thou mayest." "*Repent* and be baptised every one of you in the name of the Lord Jesus." Yet baptism is administered to infants notwithstanding that they are devoid of its prerequisite qualifications; why then hesitate to administer to them the supper of the Lord, simply because they are incapable of perceiving the nature and design of that institution?

The time must come when pædobaptist dissenters will see the absurdity of their system, and when they will either explode infant baptism, or introduce infant communion; by this means alone can they give the appearance of consistency to a practice which in its present form is as destitute of foundation in reason, as of support from divine revelation.

There are other consequences connected with infant baptism which are overlooked by

the calvinistic pædobaptist, and which are at variance with the whole of his religious system. It destroys the distinction between the church and the world maintained in the scriptures. It practically denies the doctrines of personal election and particular redemption, for there can be no election to a particular benefit when all are partakers: this universality of grace is strongly implied in the administration of infant baptism, and it is the prominent doctrine of those national establishments which pronounce every subject of their spiritual jurisdiction, a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of Heaven. Thus it is that we find personal election, particular redemption, and justification by faith, denied by the Romish and episcopalian clergy in general—for how can they hold doctrines so subversive of the opinion that *every child* is made a subject of grace by baptism? The fact is that infant baptism, traced to its source, and followed to its legitimate consequences, will be found to arise out of the most subtle system of Arminian policy ever devised; and to be the most powerful practical expedient for supporting and propagating the doctrines of universal grace and general redemption, within the compass of human agency. It proceeds upon the general principle, not only that all men are alike eligible to salvation, but that *grace*, of which

baptism is the outward sign and seal, is given to all men.

Should the calvinistic pædobaptist, who sees the connection between the practice of infant baptism and the two grand points of Arminian theology, assert, that *he does not admit* the baptismal regeneration of the church of England, *nor yet the baptismal covenant relation* so zealously maintained by the Independents, but that he regards the ordinance as affording an opportunity of addressing parents on the duties of their parental character—then we declare that the application of water to the infant for *such a purpose merely*, is not infant baptism; it is a service, called indeed by that name, but not practised *till of late* by any body of professing christians in any age or country. It is the mere act of sprinkling a child's face: it is a ceremony *sui generis*, differing in its nature, use, and design, from that general system of pædobaptism which is a rite instituted as “an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace;” and not to teach parents their duties in relation to their children!

Fourthly, We shall consider the perpetuity of baptism as an ordinance of the christian church.

As baptists we have not only to defend the ordinance of baptism from those innovations, which, by changing the primitive mode and subject, have changed its nature and design;

but, strange to say, we have now to contend for the *perpetuity* of an ordinance which has been recognised, in the practice of the whole christian church, for nearly two thousand years! Perhaps this is only one of the first fruits of that temporising spirit which would amalgamate the world with the church, and, under the mask of liberality and charity, sacrifice the doctrines and ordinances of the gospel to the carnal objections and prejudices of fashionable professors.

Is there any thing in the word of God which renders the perpetuity of this institution doubtful? Is there any thing in the institution itself inconsistent with the spirit of christianity, and which pleads for its abolition? Is the church invested with a discretionary power to rescind at pleasure a doctrine or commandment which may be deemed obsolete? Is the ordinance so completely a *non-essential*, that the neglect of it involves no guilt and merits no reproof? Can it be said that the ends and objects of baptism are not the same at all times and throughout all ages? To these inquiries we answer in the negative, and we declare, that so far from finding any thing in the ordinance itself, or in the word of God to justify its discontinuance, we are furnished from those very sources with the most convincing evidence of its high authority and lasting obligation.

It is principally objected against the perpetuity of baptism, that it was instituted as a local and temporary rite on the first promulgation of the gospel, in order to distinguish those who had come over from judaism or idolatry to the faith of Christ ; and that, being merely an ordinance of proselytism, it was not intended by its divine founder to be perpetuated from age to age with the christian dispensation : this is an assertion without proof ; mere conjecture, unsupported by evidence deduced from the oracles of God ; a principle of assumption by which the truth and permanency of the whole gospel system might be assailed with as much force as any one of its peculiar doctrines.

Is it rational to conclude, that our Lord would have introduced an institution of such short duration to the notice of the Apostles, in the solemn and dignified language of the text ? “ All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth : go ye therefore and teach all nations, *baptising them* in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost ; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you : and lo, I am with you even unto the end of the world. Amen.” Had baptism been instituted as a “ local and temporary rite” would Christ have connected it with the general promulgation of the gospel ? Would *he* have made a “ local and temporary rite” a

prominent part of a permanent system? Would he have given to it so distinguished a place in a dispensation which was to be published among all nations to the end of time? Why did he promise to be with his ministers to the end of the world, to encourage them in the administration of an ordinance, that was not designed to be as extensive and permanent as the system, of which it makes so conspicuous a part?

May we not rather believe, that, had Christ intended baptism to be nothing more than “a local rite”, he would have explained this circumstance to his Apostles, and that *they* would have made known, to the first ministers and churches, his mind on this subject? And would not *some* of those churches at least, have ceased the practice, had they understood from apostolic authority that it was only a “temporary ordinance”? But in direct opposition to all this, the command was clearly given by Christ; it was constantly practised by the Apostles; and it has continued in the christian church, without interruption, down to the present time. These are powerful evidences in support of the *perpetuity* of believer’s baptism.

We may further observe, that the perpetuity of this ordinance is founded upon the *continued authority* of our Lord’s commission. I presume it will be admitted on all sides, that when a law

enforces the observance of two or more duties, *except* there be some command to the contrary, it enjoins the performance of each, and renders the fulfilment of the one as indispensable as the other: now in the apostolic commission there are *three things* enjoined—preaching, baptising, and teaching, in the faithful discharge of which duties, the divine influence is promised to the end of the world. Why then is baptism to be discontinued, while preaching and teaching are still observed as essential parts of the christian system?

To obtain satisfaction on this important subject we shall notice a few particulars connected with our Lord's commission. First, it was given by Christ when he was invested with all power in heaven and in earth, and when he was about to ascend to the right hand of God; certainly implying that it was not to be superseded by any authority among men. Secondly, it was given to the Apostles as the chief ministers of Christ, but *not to them exclusively*, for we find others acting upon it who were not Apostles; Philip the deacon, the disciples who were scattered abroad upon the persecution which arose about Stephen, and Silas, who preached and baptised in company with Paul at Philippi: by all which it is evident that the commission was understood to be a general rule for all whom the Holy Spirit might call to the work of

the ministry, whether Apostles, Evangelists, Pastors, or Teachers. Thirdly, the commission strictly enjoins preaching, baptising, and teaching; placing them on one equal footing. Fourthly, as the *duties* of the commission were not exclusively attached to the apostolic office, so neither was the *continuance* of the commission itself confined to the apostolic age: this is manifest from the promise of Christ, “Lo, I am with you alway, *even* to the end of the world.” The words are ἕως τῆς συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος. “*Even until the end of Time.*” Now had Christ intended to restrict his commission to the apostolic age, would he not have expressed himself *so definitely* that the precise period of its termination might have been known? That the words signify “*to the end of time*” will appear from other places where they occur. (*Matt.* xiii. 39.) “The harvest, συντέλεια τοῦ αἰῶνος ἐστίν· is the end of the world.” (*Verse* 40.) “So shall it be ἐν τῇ συντελείᾳ τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου in the end of this world.” (*V.* 49.) “So shall it be ἐν τῇ συντελείᾳ τοῦ αἰῶνος, at the end of the world.” (*Matt.* xxiv. 3.) “What shall be the sign of thy coming, καὶ τῆς συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος; and of the end of the world.”

Fifthly, There is nothing in the commission that renders one part of more doubtful authority than another: whatever argument is adduced against the continuance of one of the injunctions must equally affect the rest, for they all stand

or fall together. *If baptism* is to be discontinued, so must preaching and teaching, for they were ordained at the same time, by the same divine legislator, and in precisely the same form; and therefore to reject baptism is to invalidate the whole commission, and to leave the church of Christ without any authority for the publication of the gospel. Sixthly, The connection between faith; baptism, and salvation, maintained in the commission, strongly implies that baptism was not instituted as a “local or temporary ordinance;” for the hope of salvation by faith was professed by all the primitive converts, and *was a prerequisite to their baptism*: nor do we hesitate to affirm, that, if indeed baptism can be proved to have been only “local and temporary,” then the obligation to believe the gospel was binding only on those who lived in the apostolic age, and salvation itself is a temporary and local blessing.

Seventhly, Neither can the baptism enjoined in our Lord’s commission refer to that divine influence, called elsewhere the baptism of the Holy Ghost; which, contrary to the plain testimony and strict analogy of scripture, some have affirmed. The Apostles, to whom the command was given to preach and to baptise, were not to enter upon the execution of their office until they were endued with the Holy Spirit; thereby showing that the commission

was to be fulfilled under his immediate agency. "And ye are witnesses of these things. And behold, I send the promise of the Father upon you, but tarry ye in the City of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high." (*Luke* xxiv. 48, 49.) "And being assembled together with them he commanded them that they would not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptised with water, but ye shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." (*Acts* i. 4, 5.) "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (*Acts* i. 8.) "The same is He who shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost." (*Matt.* iii. 11.)

These latter words were spoken by John the baptist when baptising some who were afterward Apostles. They contain a remarkable prediction of the increase of Messiah's kingdom, of the institution of the Apostolic office, and of the gift of the Holy Ghost; and they are applied by our Lord himself to the day of pentecost, when the Apostles were as completely immersed in the Holy Spirit as the body is immersed in water at baptism; they were overwhelmed with his glorious presence and influences, which filled the house where they were

assembled. Dr. Campbell, though a pædobaptist, very properly renders the words of John “he will baptise you *in* the Holy Spirit and fire;” and this agrees with the circumstances of the fact as recorded by Luke. (*See Acts* ii. 2, 3, 4.) “And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”

This miraculous communication of the Holy Ghost, figuratively styled a baptism, relates to Christ as the administrator, and to the Apostles as the subjects; and we do not find the inspired writers describing the extraordinary operations of the Spirit as a baptism, except in a figurative sense.

Again, in opposition to the notion that the baptism specified in our Lord’s commission signifies the baptism of the Spirit, we observe, that the Apostles on the day of pentecost went forth and preached, *baptising in water* three thousand who were converted to Christ; that *they* certainly understood the baptism in the commission to mean *water baptism*, and did accordingly *immerse their converts in water*; that they exhorted all who heard them to

believe in the Lord Jesus, and to be *baptised in water* for the remission of sins ; (*Acts* ii. 37, 42. viii. 12. xxxv. 40.) ; that they *even baptised in water* those who had previously received the Holy Ghost ; (*Acts* x. 44, 48.) ; that they continued to preach and to baptise to the end of their days : and that when they departed, they left their successors acting on the commission as on a statute which was in full vigour. These facts clearly shew that *they* considered the reception of the Holy Ghost and of water baptism to be two distinct things ; and that the possession of the former to any degree, did by no means destroy the obligation to attend to the latter. “When Paul was filled with the Holy Ghost, he arose and was baptised.” (*Acts* ix. 17, 18.)

Besides which, did the Apostles ever profess to baptise in the Holy Ghost ? Did they ever insinuate that they had power to bestow the Spirit ? and must they not have possessed that power, if the baptism they were commanded to administer referred to the communication of divine influence ? Have they in their epistles, in which they have largely treated on the work of the Spirit, represented this work, in any of its forms, as the baptism enjoined by Christ ? If water baptism was not intended in the commission, how came the Apostles to practise it, in connexion with the other duties enjoined ? Why

did they baptise in water the three thousand on the day of pentecost, and especially, why baptise those who had already received the Holy Ghost? In a word, *if the baptism* commanded by our Lord *is not to be understood literally*, then were the Apostles the first broachers of an error which promises to run parallel with the progress of christianity in our world!

But the nature of the ordinance strongly pleads on behalf of its perpetuity. If it be admitted, as in fact it is, by the church of Christ, that external ordinances are not incompatible with the spirit of christianity, then I know of no institution so fit to be the accompaniment of faith, and the distinctive mark of a christian profession, as baptism. It is both significant and impressive; it accords with the great end of our religion, to separate men from the world and to bring them into fellowship with God; it is a solemn act of divine worship; a public recognition of the Lord Jesus in his office of Prophet, Priest and King in Zion; it is an open avowal of our belief in that great mystery of the gospel, the trinity of equal persons in the unity of the Godhead. And shall this instructive rite be restricted to proselytes from Judaism and idolatry? Shall we take away from any member of Christ's kingdom that moral motive to propriety and holiness of conduct which is so forcibly urged by the Apostle,

“shall *we* continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid! How shall *we* who are dead to sin live any longer therein? Know ye not that *so many of us as were baptised into Jesus Christ* were baptised into his death? *Therefore* we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, *even so we also should walk in newness of life.*” (*Rom.* vi. 1, 2, 3, 4.)

There are other consequences which result from making baptism an ordinance of proselytism. A line of distinction would be thereby drawn between one class of professors and another; plainly implying that those who come over from idolatry are less likely to be sincere, and are therefore required to submit to a severer test than others: upon this plan the laws of Christ would be unequal in their operations, and partial in their exactments, and that equality in the moral condition of all men, which the scriptures so decidedly maintain, would itself be rendered doubtful. “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptised into Christ, have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.” (*Gal.* iii. 26, 27, 28.) “There is neither Greek nor Jew,

circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond, nor free, but Christ is all and in all." (*Col.* iii. 11.)

But again, the perpetuity of believer's baptism is proved by the intimate relation it sustains to the most important and permanent truths of the christian dispensation. "There is one body, and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all." (*Eph.* iv. 5, 6.) Here the doctrine of baptism stands like one of the seven pillars, which are the strength and glory of the christian fabric. Here it is presented to our view in connexion with truths, which must constitute essential parts of christianity as long as christianity shall exist. Here it is adduced as a powerful motive to unity among the brethren. For there is "*one body*," or church, which comprehends all the elect: there is "*one spirit*" that animates this body by his sacred influences, and by whom all its members are called to be partakers of the glory of Christ: there is "*one hope*" of this calling which is common to the whole: there is "*one Lord*," even Jesus, who is the head of the body the church, and to whom every member is required to render worship and obedience: there is "*one faith*," one great rule and doctrine of faith, the gospel of the ever blessed God: there is "*one baptism*"

designed to accompany the profession of this faith, as the outward sign: and there is “*one God and Father of all*, who is above all and through all,”—the supreme ruler and disposer of men and things, “who is in all” that believe, by his vital energies and grace, to afford them strength and consolation.

It is the opinion of some that this passage refers to the baptism of the Spirit, and *not* to baptism in its literal sense; it will be difficult, however, to *prove this*, so long as it remains upon record that the Apostles and primitive ministers did actually baptise their converts, and that all who entered the church in those times did enter it by baptism: besides, it may be strongly argued that the Apostle is here enumerating several distinct propositions, each of which constitutes a first principle of the christian profession—that he had just before adverted to the divine influence and ministry of the Holy Ghost in the church, “there is one body and one spirit,” which would render a recurrence of the subject unnecessary—that the *order* in which baptism stands, is opposed to such an interpretation, for it succeeds to faith, “one Lord, one faith, one baptism”; and if faith be an *effect* of the spirit’s agency, baptism certainly cannot refer to that divine influence by which faith is produced, since this would be to place the cause after the effect.—

Besides, the supposition that this baptism refers to the influences of the Spirit induces one or more of the following consequences. Either, 1. that if water baptism was not laid aside in the days of the Apostles, it was not to continue after their decease; or 2. that this rite, so positively enjoined by our Lord upon all who believe in his name, was in the estimation of the Apostle of such minor importance as not to deserve a distinct enumeration among the first principles of the oracles of God; or, 3. that the Apostle had been guilty of an omission in mentioning but *one* baptism, when in fact there were *two*, one of water, and another of the spirit, alike applicable to all believers. On a close examination, however, of the New Testament, I think it will not be found that the ordinary influences of the spirit are ever called baptism; and *that* interpretation of the sacred text which is opposed to the general analogy of the scriptures, and which tends moreover to weaken the authority of a divine law, must be suspicious. When, therefore, we hear the Apostle say that there is “one baptism,” when we know that he administered water baptism, and that he drew thence the most powerful moral motives to holiness of life, what can we suppose the Ephesians understood by the expression, “one baptism,” except that solemn ordinance which Jesus instituted, when he said, “go and teach all nations,

baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”

Secondly. We shall consider the mode of administering this ordinance.

Whenever errors exist either in faith or practice, they will be found to originate, not in the paucity or obscurity of our Lord's commands, but in the predominance of certain principles which bias the mind in its inquiry after truth : the prevailing cause of mistakes in religion, is the want of an impartial investigation of the scriptures ; they are not allowed to speak their own language, they are not treated as infallible guides, with a simple intention of abiding by their decision. How many peruse them fettered by educational prejudices, and determined to find evidence to support their own theory, and justify their own practice ! Hence that violence which has been offered to the sacred text, and that palpable disregard to the natural order, and plain signification of words, which is manifest in so many expositors.

No passage in the New Testament appears more obvious in its meaning, than that now under consideration ; and none has been more perverted by the reasonings of disputatious theologians : what can be more intelligible than the statement given by the inspired penmen, respecting our Lord's commission to his Apostles ? What can be more manifest than that faith and

baptism are the unalterable terms of admission into the visible kingdom of Christ? What can be more evident than that the Apostles were required to preach, and to baptise all who believed in their word, whether brought from under the veil of Judaism, the iron bondage of idolatry, or the influence of that more refined, but not less destructive degeneracy, under which so many millions are to be found, in what are called christian countries? *All* have sinned and come short of the glory of God, therefore all must be born again, and saved, if saved at all, precisely through the same medium, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. To all is this proclamation to be made, "he that believeth and is baptised shall be saved."—The question then arises, what is that baptism which is required of all who believe in Christ, and how ought it to be administered.

We maintain that baptism means immersion, and that *immersion alone* is consistent with the nature and design of the ordinance, with the will of its divine founder, and with the practice of the Apostles. This we shall endeavour to prove,

First, From the signification of the word.

Baptism is a Greek word, and therefore we must refer to Greek writers for its proper meaning. It is formed from βαπτισμος a verbal noun, derived from the perfect passive βεβαπτισμαι

from the verb βαπτίζω to immerse, a derivative from βάπτω to dip.

That the verbs βάπτω and βαπτίζω are not generic terms, denoting the application of water *in any way*, but that they are confined to the specific mode, dipping, may be proved by a reference to their use in the works of classical Greek writers, who certainly understood their own language better than any other in later times; and the pædobaptist cannot cite one authority from these writers in defence of *his* explanation of the terms. To argue that "it is not necessary that the *biblical* sense of the words should be the same as the *classical*, or that which is commonly found in profane writers," is to acknowledge a want of support from those authorities, and to attempt to nullify that mass of evidence to which the highest importance would have been attached, had it been as strong on the side of our opponents as it is on ours.

Neither is it probable, that the writers of the New Testament, who used the popular language of the day, and wrote as much for the instruction of Greeks as Jews, would have employed the term in a sense contrary to its etymological and usual signification. A native of Corinth, of Athens, or of Ephesus, would understand the word βαπτίζω when used by the inspired penmen, as having precisely the same

meaning that it has in the writings of their own countrymen; and in point of fact, the Greek christians *did so understand the term*, for they constantly administered the ordinance of baptism by *immersion*.

In addition to the mass of evidence derived from classical authors, philologists of the first eminence have shewn that the radical, primary, and natural meaning of the verb βαπτίζω, is the same as βάπτω, which is to dip or immerse; to dye by dipping.

Thus Stephanus; “βαπτίζω, to dip or immerse; also to dye; because we immerse in water those things which are to be dyed or washed.”

Scapula; “βαπτίζω, to dip or immerse; to plunge under water; to overwhelm in water.”

Suicerus; “βάπτω signifies to dip, to dye by dipping, hence he is said βάπτειν ὑδρίαν to dip the bucket, who draws water out of a well or river, which cannot be done unless the whole bucket is immersed under water. Wool and garments when dyed are said βάπτεσθαι to be baptised or dipped, because they are entirely immersed in the dying vat, that they may imbibe the colour; βαπτίζω has very properly the same signification in the best writers.”

Hederic; “βαπτίζω to dip, to immerse, to overwhelm in water.”

Parkhurst, “βαπτίζω from βάπτω to dip, immerse, or plunge in water. The Seventy use

βαπτίζομαι (mid.) for washing oneself by immersion, answering to the Hebrew טבל 2 Kings, v. 14. comp. v. 10. Thus also it is applied in the apocryphal books; see Judith xii. 7. and Eccles. xxxiv. 25. Figuratively, to be baptised, or plunged in a flood or sea, as it were, of grievous afflictions and sufferings.”

Schleusner; “βαπτίζω properly signifies to immerse, to dye by dipping, to dip into water; it is derived from βάπτω to dip, and agrees in its signification with the Hebrew word טבל which is to dip.”

Grotius, in his annotations on Matthew iii. 6. says, “that baptism was accustomed to be performed by immersion, and not by perfusion, is evident both from the meaning of the word, from the places chosen for the administration of this rite, (*John* iii. 23. *Acts* viii. 38.) and from the many allusions of the Apostles which cannot refer to sprinkling. (*Rom.* vi. 3, 4. *Col.* ii. 12.) The custom of pouring or sprinkling appears to have been resorted to some time later, in favour of those, who, lying dangerously ill, desired to dedicate themselves to Christ; these were called Clinics by the rest: see Cyprian’s Epistle to Magnus. Nor ought we to wonder that the ancient Latins used tingere for baptizare, since the Latin word tingo properly and generally signifies the same as mergo, which is to dip.” The celebrated Vossius, the most

admired critic of his age, says, “βάπτω and βαπτίζω are rendered by *mergo*, or *mergito* and *tingo*, yet they *properly* signify *mergo* to immerse ; and *tingo* to dye *only by a metalepsis* ; for dying follows immersion, and is that which takes place when the thing is dipped.” See *Etymo. in voc. baptismus*.

These men, whose accurate knowledge of the Greek language has never been doubted, are all agreed that the primary and true meaning of βαπτίζω is to immerse ; and that it signifies to dye, *only in a secondary sense*, as expressing the consequence of dipping.

This word also occurs in the Septuagint, or ancient Greek version of the Old Testament, where it is used in a ceremonial and sacramental sense, and we shall now proceed to shew that it has precisely the same signification in these writings that it has in the Greek classics.

The verb βάπτω is used in the Septuagint about eighteen times ; in fourteen of these instances it is rendered to dip in the English version ; once to plunge, (*Job* ix. 31.) once to put into water, (*Lev.* xi. 32) and twice to wet, (*Dan.* iv. 33. v. 21.) In the two last places our translators have not kept up the force of the Greek word ἐδάφη, nor of the Chaldee word יִצְטַבֵּעַ, both of which signify to immerse, to soak, or thoroughly imbue. These words are here used in a figurative, and not in a literal sense ; yet their primary idea is

preserved in the circumstance to which they refer; for had Nebuchadnezzar's body been baptised in water, he could not have been more completely drenched, than he was by being surrounded with, and enveloped in the dews to which he was exposed.

We learn from the book of Judges that Gideon wrung a bowl-full of water from the fleece which he had exposed all night to the dew. The *copiousness* of the dews in the East is described by travellers as being so great that any body exposed to their influence would be as completely wet as if immersed under water: Shaw says "The dews, particularly as we have the heavens only for our covering, would frequently *wet us to the skin.*" And Niebuhr remarks, "In the most sandy tracts near the sea, the dews are singularly copious; but notwithstanding the humidity, the air is so pure that the inhabitants sleep abroad: I never slept sounder than when I found my bed *all wet with dew* in the morning."

The verb βαπτίζω occurs but twice in the Septuagint; first, in 2 Kings, v. 14, "Then went he down, και ἐβαπτίσατο ἐν τῷ Ἰορδάνῃ and *dipped himself* in Jordan," as our translators have very properly rendered it. Some have contended, in order to weaken the force of the original word, that Naaman was commanded *to wash himself*; very true, but we ask in *what way* would it be most natural for him to wash himself with a

view to be cleansed from so loathsome a disease as the leprosy—by *sprinkling* himself, by *pouring water on* himself, or by *dipping* himself seven times in Jordan, according to the prophet's direction? And there can be no valid objection against this mode, that it would be inconvenient for want of change of raiment, because it appears that Naaman travelled with a considerable wardrobe.

Again, we find it in Isaiah lxxi. 4; the clause which our translators have rendered "*fearfulness affrighted me,*" is in the Septuagint *καὶ ἡ ἀνομία μὲ βαπτίζει*, "and iniquity baptises me," evidently meaning that a man's sins overwhelm, and entirely cover him, and not that they merely sprinkle him!

We shall now proceed to examine, in a few instances, the signification of the words as they stand in the New Testament. The verb *βάπτω* is used three times; first, in Luke xvi. 24; in this parable, it must of necessity signify to dip, and our translators have so rendered it, "Send Lazarus that *βάψῃ* he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue." Again, in John xiii. 26, our Lord, describing him who should betray Him, says, "He it is to whom I shall give a sop *βάψας* having dipped it; and *ἐμβάψας* having dipped it, he gave it to Judas." In Rev. xix. 13. the word undoubtedly means to dip; "And he was clothed with

a vesture βαλεαμμένον dipped, or dyed, in blood.” Whether this garment were emblematical of Christ’s sufferings for the sins of his people, or of the dreadful slaughter of his enemies in his final triumph over them, the figure is alike expressive of the extent of *His* sufferings, or of the overwhelming nature of *their* overthrow.

According to Stephanus the verb βαπτίζω occurs more than seventy times in the New Testament, in reference to this ordinance. We shall notice the following passages as confirming the meaning for which we contend; Matt. iii. 5, 6.—“then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and ἐβαπτίζοντο ἐν τῷ Ιορδάνῃ ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ were baptised of him in Jordan, confessing their sins:” see also the parallel passage, Mark i. 5. In both of these places, the phrase has the same signification, allowing for the different inflection of the verb, as in 2 Kings v. 14. which our translators have rendered to dip. Mark i. 9.—“and it came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and ἐβαπτίσθη was baptised of John εἰς in Jordan. And straightway coming up out of the water, &c.” The account here given of this ceremony abundantly supports that sense of the word for which we contend. Jesus is said to have been baptised or immersed *in the river*, and to have *come up out* of the water; this mode of expression

would surely not have been adopted, had he stood at the brink of the river, and had John only sprinkled or poured water upon him. This however the great body of learned pædobaptists themselves concede, for they confess that our *Lord was immersed in the river Jordan*—we believe so too, and we consider his example as defining and illustrating the precise mode of that baptism which he afterwards instituted in his church.

But it is contended by some, and those principally Independents, that the verb βαπτίζω signifies to *sprinkle* as well as to immerse; and that sprinkling was not only *a mode*, but probably *the mode* of primitive baptism. Let us then see how the use of the word *sprinkle*, in those passages where our translators have retained *baptise*, agrees with the sense intended to be conveyed. Mark i. 4, 5.—“John did *sprinkle* in the wilderness, and preach the *sprinkling* of repentance for the remission of sins.” “And there went out unto him all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all *sprinkled* of him *in the river Jordan*.” Mark i. 9.—“And Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was *sprinkled* of John *in Jordan*. And straightway *coming up out of the water*, &c.” Acts ii. 38.—“Then Peter said unto them, repent, and be *sprinkled*, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ.”

Ibid. v. 41—"Then they that gladly received his word, were *sprinkled*." Acts xxii. 16—"And now, why tarriest thou? Arise, and be *sprinkled*, and wash away thy sins." Rom. vi. 3, 4.—"Know ye not, that so many of us as were *sprinkled into Jesus Christ*, were *sprinkled into his death*? Therefore we are *buried* with him by *sprinkling* into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Gal. iii. 27.—"For as many of you as have been *sprinkled into Christ* have put on Christ." Col. ii. 12.—"*Buried with him in sprinkling*, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." Are not these quotations sufficient to prove the utter inadequateness of the term *sprinkle*, to convey the meaning of the sacred text? Does not the substitution of this word destroy the force and beauty of the language of scripture?

Moreover, when the act of sprinkling is referred to in the sacred volume, it is expressed by the verbs *ῥαίνω* or *ῥαντίζω* to sprinkle, which verbs are generally found in connexion with the preposition *ἐπι* upon, but never with the preposition *εἰς* into. Whereas the verb *βαπτίζω* which signifies *to immerse*, is accompanied with the appropriate prepositions, *ἐν* *in* and *εἰς* *into*: Jesus was *immersed in* Jordan: the inhabitants of

Jerusalem were *immersed in* the river Jordan : Philip and the eunuch went down *εις into* the water, and he baptised him.

The verb βαπτίζω is used twice by our Lord in reference to his own sufferings. First, in Mark x. 38, 39.—“But Jesus said unto them, ye know not what ye ask; can ye drink of the cup that I drink of, και το βάπτισμα, ὃ ἐγὼ βαπτίζομαι βαπτισθῆναι and be baptised with the baptism that I am baptised with? And Jesus said unto them, ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of, and with the baptism that I am baptised withal, shall ye be baptised. And again in Luke xii. 50.—“But I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!” Dr. Campbell, though a pædobaptist, has confirmed our opinion of the meaning of this word, by using the terms immersion and immerse, in his translation of these passages; indeed, who would venture to substitute the word sprinkling or pouring, as an equally apt illustration of Christ’s sufferings?

There are two places where this verb is translated *to wash*, which are adduced by the Independents as strong evidence against us. Mark vii. 3, 4.—“For the Pharisees and all the Jews, except *νίψωνται* they *wash* their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except *βαπτίσωνται* *they wash*, they eat not.” Also Luke xi. 38.—“And

when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that he had not first ἐβαπτίσθη *washed* before dinner." There is an obscurity about the former passage as it stands in the English Testament, occasioned by our translators not having preserved the distinction which exists in the original. Mark evidently refers to *two different modes* of ablution, practised by those Jews who held the tradition of the elders, and by the Pharisees in particular. *The one* included the washing of the hands in the ordinary way, before sitting down to meat, and is expressed by the verb *νίπτω*. *The other* included a higher degree of purification observed on returning from market, or any place of public resort, and is expressed by the verb *βαπτίζω*. If a distinction be not intended by the use of these two different verbs, then there is a needless repetition; for certainly those who always scrupulously washed their hands before meat, would not omit the practice on returning from the market—a circumstance which would render it more necessary; and the historian has shewn that *they were more particular on this occasion*, than in the ordinary course, by using the verb *βαπτίζω* to dip, instead of *νίπτω* to wash the hands.

This explication is defended by pædobaptist critics of the highest celebrity: Dr. Lightfoot says, "The Jews used the washing of the hands and the plunging of the hands; and the word

νίψωνται wash, in our evangelist seems to answer to the former, and *βαπτίσωνται baptise* to the latter." Dr. Campbell also, "For the Pharisees, and indeed all the Jews who observe the tradition of the Elders, eat not until they have washed their hands by pouring a little water upon them; and if they be come from the market, *by dipping them.*" Hammond expresses himself to the same purport; "The word signifies the washing of any part, as the hands here, by way of immersion in water, as that is opposed to affusion or pouring water upon them." And Grotius asserts that immersion is the sense of this passage, for he says, "They purified themselves with greater care from pollution contracted at the market, not only by washing their hands, but by immersing their whole body." Whether this immersion extended to the wrists only, as supposed by Pocock, Hammond, Whitby, and some few others, or to the elbows, as maintained by Theophylact, Drusius, and Capellus; or whether the whole body was immersed, according to the opinion of Vatablus and Grotius, is of little importance to the subject in hand, since they are all agreed that the word *βαπτίζω* signifies to dip.

We shall further prove that this was the primitive mode :

Secondly, From the places where the first christians administered it.

We are told that John and his disciples baptised *in Jordan*, the chief river in Palestine. *In this river* Jesus was baptised, and it is expressly said concerning him, that “When he was baptised, he *went up* straightway *out of* the water.” Here are two particulars, which we shall notice—first, the *place where* John baptised; *in the river Jordan*. It is not said that he baptised on the banks of the river; nor that he took water out of the river, and sprinkled or poured it upon his converts; but that he *baptised in the river*: no form of words can be more perspicuous: had sprinkling or pouring been *the mode*, or even *a mode*, why did he sprinkle them *in a river*? No administrator of infant baptism at the present day, chooses a river as the fittest place where to perform the ceremony of sprinkling; he knows very well that a little water in a basin is all that he needs, and he wisely directs it to be brought to him:—surely John and his disciples, and Jesus and his Apostles, would have followed a similar plan, had they been in the habit of sprinkling; but if they uniformly baptised or immersed their converts, there is a propriety in the places which they selected.

Again, it is said of Christ, “And Jesus when he was baptised *went up* straightway *out of* the water.” It has been objected that these words mean no more than that Christ went away from

the water, that is, from the banks of the river ; Dr. Campbell has rendered the passage “Jesus being baptised no sooner *arose out of the water*” ; if he *arose out* of the water, it is evident he must first *have gone down into it* ;—and thus according to the rendering of that eminent critic, the pædobaptists are driven from one of their strong holds !

That ἀπὸ has the sense of *out of*, is plain from Matt. vii. 4, “ Let me pull out the mote ἀπὸ *out of* thine eye,” and again, chap. xiv. 29, “ And when Peter was come down ἀπὸ *out of* the ship¹.” Dr. Whitby has the following remarks on this subject, “The observation of the Greek church is this, that He who *ascended out of the water*, must first *descend down into it* ; baptism therefore is to be performed not by sprinkling, but by washing the body ; and indeed it can be only from ignorance of the Jewish rites in baptism that this is questioned.”

It is also said that “ John was baptising at Enon near to Salem, *because there was much water there.*” This is a confirmation of what we have already advanced respecting his baptising in the river Jordan : nor does the objection made by certain pædobaptists to the phrase *much water*, weaken the evidence which we derive from it in favour of our opinion. For,

¹ See also Mark xvi. 7, Luke iv. 35, 41, Acts ii. 9, xvii. 2, xxviii. 23.

admitting that the words ὕδατα πολλὰ signify *many waters*, it does not necessarily follow that these were shallow streams: the expression is idiomatical, while the sense is to be taken in the Jewish acceptation of the terms; and for this, we must turn to the Old Testament. Here we shall find ὕδατα πολλὰ corresponding with מים רבים (majim rabbim) *many waters*. The Hebrews applied this phrase to all large collections of water—the sea is called by the Psalmist in the 77th and 107th Psalms, מים רבים *great waters*, and by the seventy ὕδατα πολλὰ *many waters*¹. And again, Psalm xviii. 16,—“He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of מים רבים ὕδατων πολλων *many waters*.” Ps. xciii. 4,—“The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of מים רבים *many waters*.” Rev. i. 15,—“and his voice as the sound ὕδατων πολλων *of many waters*.” Certainly it must be conceded that the phrase, as used in the foregoing instances, refers to a large body of water: a shallow brook, a narrow stream, or many of these pursuing their course in one direction, could never be an apt illustration of the voice of Jehovah, which breaketh the cedars—could not illustrate the deep affliction from which the Psalmist was delivered by the arm of omnipotence! And why should the very same phrase, when used in the New

¹ See also Is. xvii. 12, 13. Ezec. xliii. 2.

Testament, be supposed to mean small springs, and shallow rivulets, when the whole connexion in which it stands in the Old Testament, proves that it must mean a considerable body of water?

The history of Philip baptising the eunuch, is strong evidence in favour of immersion. We are told that “they came to a certain water, and the eunuch said, see here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptised? And they went down both of them into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptised him; and when they were come up out of the water, &c.” Here, as in other passages to which we have referred, they both went down into the water, and when Philip had baptised the eunuch, they both came up out of the water. The historian is very particular in describing the circumstance of their descent into the water, as well as of their ascent out of it. The attempts which have been made to overthrow the fact here recorded, by disputing the proper signification of the Greek prepositions, is puerile in the extreme; and desperate must be that cause which requires to be supported by such an expedient. That the prepositions *εις* and *εξ* do, in some instances mean *to* and *from*, no one will deny; yet they more frequently and necessarily signify *into* and *out of*: their true meaning, however, must be decided by their connexion; and it will be found, on an impartial survey of

this passage, that the preposition *εις* must have the force of *into*, in order to give the meaning intended by the historian; for he says, that Philip and the eunuch being come *επι* to a certain water, they both of them *κατέβησαν* went down or descended *εις* into it.

In the following scriptures also, the preposition *εις* necessarily means *into*. Eph. iv. 9;—“Now that he *ἀνέβη* ascended, what is it but that he also *κατέβη* descended first *εις* into the lower parts of the earth.” Matt. ii. 13;—“Take the young child and his mother, and flee *εις* into Egypt.” Mark xvi. 25;—“And very early in the morning, they came *επι* to the sepulchre at the rising of the sun, and entering *εις* into the sepulchre.” John v. 7;—“Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me *εις* into the pool.” John vi. 16, 17;—“And when even was come, his disciples *κατέβησαν* went down, not *εις* into, but *επι* to the sea; and entered *εις* into a ship,” Acts xii. 10;—“When they were past the first and the second ward, they came *επι* to the iron gate that leadeth *εις* into the city.”

From these and other passages it is evident that the preposition in Acts vii. 38. ought to be rendered *into*, according to our translation, shewing that Philip took the eunuch into the water and immersed him.

The practice of baptising in rivers has been very common in various countries, and was per-

formed in the first ages of the christian church, in imitation of the apostolic mode. Bede, in his ecclesiastical history, gives an account of Paulinus baptising king Edwin at York in the year 627, and afterwards of his baptising the king's son, and many of the nobles and other persons at different times in the rivers Glen, Swale, and Trent. St. Austin also used to baptise his converts in the rivers in this country. Dr. Wall justly says, (*chap. ix. p. 292.*) "Before the christian religion was so far encouraged as to have churches built for its service, they baptised in any river, pond, &c." So Tertullian says; "It is all one whether a person is washed in the sea, or in a pond, in a fountain, or in a river, in a standing, or in a running water: nor is there any difference between those whom John baptised in Jordan, and those that Peter baptised in the river Tiber." This early Father makes no quibble about the preposition so much disputed by some in our day; he says, 'John did baptise *in* the river Jordan,' and that they baptised, not *by* ponds and rivers, but *in* them.

In after ages, when places of worship were built, and churches formed, baptisteries were made large enough for the immersion of adults; of this kind, were the baptisteries at Constantinople, Ravenna, Venice, Florence, and Milan. These buildings contained, besides the bath in

which the converts were immersed, separate apartments where the men and women changed their clothes. They continued in use till about the sixth century, when baptisteries were erected in the places of worship; but when dipping was changed for pouring, the baptistery gave place to the font; and since pouring has been succeeded by sprinkling, the font has in its turn made way for the basin.

Thirdly, Baptism by immersion is also supported by the constant practice of the Greek church.

The Greek church, which took its rise in the first ages of christianity, has to this day invariably baptised by immersion; its practice therefore, is of some authority in the present controversy. That body of christians, which goes under the general denomination of the Greek church, is scattered throughout Europe, Asia, and Africa, and is, according to Dr. King's account, of greater extent than the Latin church, with all the branches that have sprung from it¹. That these christians have constantly administered baptism by immersion is acknowledged by the whole testimony of ecclesiastical history. Dr. Wall, when speaking of the introduction of pouring and sprinkling, says, "What has been said of this custom

¹ See Rites and Ceremonies of the Greek church.

of pouring and sprinkling water, in the ordinary use of baptism, is to be understood only in reference to these western parts of Europe, for it is used ordinarily no where else. The Greek church, in all the branches of it, does still use immersion; and they hardly count a child, except in cases of sickness, well baptised without it. And so do all other christians in the world, except the Latins. That which I hinted before is a rule that does not fail in any particular that I know of; viz. All the nations of christians, that do now, or formerly did submit to the authority of the Bishop of Rome, do ordinarily baptise their infants by pouring or sprinkling; and though the English received not this custom till after the decay of popery, yet they have received it from such neighbouring nations as had begun it in the times of the Pope's power: but all other christians in the world, who never owned the Pope's usurped power, do and ever did dip their infants in the ordinary use. And if we take the divisions of the world from the three main parts of it; all the christians in Asia, all in Africa, and about one third part of Europe, are of the last sort, (*who baptise by dipping,*) in which third part of Europe, are comprehended the christians of Græcia, Thracia, Servia, Bulgaria, Rascia, Walachia, Moldavia, Russia, Nigra, &c. and even the Muscovites, who, if coldness of the

country will excuse, might plead for a dispensation with the most reason of any." (*chap. ix. pt. 2.*) What is this, but an acknowledgement of one of the grand principles for which the baptists contend, which the Greeks, who of course must have understood the language formerly in common use among them, have from the earliest times through all succeeding ages, maintained, that immersion is the scriptural, and *only proper mode*, and that sprinkling is a popish innovation. And this learned pædobaptist distinctly confesses that the church of Rome has changed the original mode by introducing sprinkling in the room of dipping.

Not only has the Greek church continued the practice of immersion, but all those different bodies who have seceded from it. The Nestorians, and the Monophysites, who separated in the fifth century,—the Georgians, the Armenians, with numerous other sects, scattered throughout Egypt, Nubia, Abyssinia, and the more distant parts of Africa and Asia, have constantly adhered to this mode: but this practice has been peculiar to the Greek and Eastern churches only during the last five centuries; for before that time, according to the testimony of both papists and protestants, it was the custom of the whole Latin church and all its branches to baptise by immersion; and this they did till the thirteenth century. The

French church seems to have been the first that practised sprinkling ; from them it spread into Italy, where, about the year 1250, dipping as the general mode was discontinued ; from thence, it was admitted into Germany, and other countries under the authority of the Pope ; and last of all, it was introduced into the English church in the sixteenth century, where it was practised in direct opposition to the ritual, which prescribed the following mode,—“Then the priest shall take the child in his hands, and ask the name ; and naming the child, shall dip it in the water thrice ; first dipping the right side, secondly the left side, the third time dipping the face toward the font'.”

How different is this account from those representations which are made by a certain class of pædobaptist teachers in our day, who labour to impress the minds of their hearers with the notion that dipping is a modern custom, observed only by a very small and despised sect, called Baptists, who sprang up quite recently in Germany, Holland, and England ; while their own mode of administering baptism, by sprinkling, is, they say, of the highest antiquity, and of universal practice !

Fourthly, We shall now notice the testimony of learned pædobaptists :

¹ See Wall's *Infant Baptism*, chap ix, pt. 2. Also Gibson's *Codex Juris Ecclesiastici Anglicani*, vol. i. p. 440.

It is remarkable, that while some pædobaptists, in their zeal for sprinkling, represent our practice as without foundation in the precepts of the New Testament, and the example of the Apostles; there are others, distinguished for their piety and learning, who candidly confess that our mode is the most consistent with scripture precept and primitive practice, and who deplore the introduction of sprinkling. Such a discrepancy of opinion, among persons who agree in espousing the same cause, may at the first view appear singular, yet it is only the natural consequence of departing from the principles so clearly defined in the oracles of God; and it serves to prove, both that the validity of the present practice of pædobaptists is, in their own estimation, doubtful, and that there are some points in their system, which are not founded upon that high authority, and supported by that indubitable evidence which render them invincibly conclusive to a thoughtful and reasoning mind. In proof of this we refer to the following authorities.

Dr. Wall, speaking of the primitive christians, says, "Their general and ordinary way was to baptise by immersing or dipping the person, whether it were an infant, or grown man, or woman, into the water. This is so plain and clear, by an infinite number of passages, that as one cannot but pity the weak endeavours of

such pædobaptists as would maintain the negative of it; so also we ought to disown, and show a dislike of the profane scoffs which some people give to the English antipædobaptists, merely for their use of dipping. 'Tis one thing to maintain that that circumstance is not absolutely necessary to the essence of baptism; and another to go about to represent it as ridiculous and foolish, or as shameful and indecent; when it was in all probability the way by which our blessed Saviour, and for certain was the most usual and ordinary way, by which the ancient christians did receive their baptism. 'Tis a great want of prudence, as well as of honesty, to refuse to grant to an adversary what is certainly true and may be proved so: it creates a jealousy of all the rest that one says."—*vol. ii. chap 9.*

Dr. Whitby says, "It were to be wished that this custom, of immersion, might be again of general use; and aspersion only permitted, as of old, in case of the Clinici, and in present danger of death."—*Comment. on Rom. vi.*

Mr. D. Rogers says, "None of old were wont to be sprinkled; and I confess myself unconvinced by demonstration from scripture for infants' sprinkling. It ought to be the church's part to cleave to the institution, which is *dipping*; and he betrays the church, whose officer he is, to a disorderly error, if he cleave

not to the institution, which is to dip. That the minister is to dip in water as the meetest act, the word βαπτίζω notes it. For the Greeks wanted not other words to express any other act besides dipping, if the institution could bear it. What resemblance of the burial or the resurrection of Christ in sprinkling. *All antiquity and Scripture confirm that way.* To dip, therefore, is exceedingly material to the ordinance; which was the usage of old, without exception to countries, hot or cold."

Sir Norton Knatchbull, Dr. Towerson, Mr. Mede, Bishop Taylor, and others, express themselves as strongly on this subject as Mr. D. Rogers.

Dr. Cave, in his *Primitive Christianity*, observes, "that the party baptised, was wholly immersed, or put under water; which was the almost constant and universal custom of those times; whereby they did most notably and significantly express the great end and effect of baptism. As in immersion there are in a manner three several acts, the putting the person into water, his abiding there for a little time, and his rising up again; so by these were represented Christ's death, burial, and resurrection; and in conformity thereunto, our dying unto sin, the destruction of its power, and our resurrection to a new course of life. By the person being *put into water*, was lively

represented the putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, and being washed from the filth and pollution of them; by his *abode under it*, which was a kind of burial in the water, his entering into a state of death or mortification, like as Christ remained for some time under the state or power of death; therefore as many as are baptised into Christ, are said to be baptised into his death, and to be buried with him by baptism into death, that the old man being crucified with him, the body of sin might be destroyed that henceforth he might not serve sin; for that he that is dead is freed from sin, *as the Apostle clearly explains the meaning of this rite.* And then by *his emersion or rising up* out of the water, was signified his entering upon a new course of life differing from that he lived before: that like as Christ was raised up by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”—*pt. i. chap. 10.*

Venema declares, “It is without controversy that baptism in the primitive church was administered by immersion into water, and *not by sprinkling*; seeing John is said to have baptised in Jordan and where there was much water; as Christ also did by his disciples in the neighbourhood of those places. Philip also going down into the water baptised the eunuch; to which also the Apostle refers, Rom. vi. Nor is there any necessity to have recourse to the idea

of sprinkling in our interpretation of Acts ii. 41. where three thousand souls are said to be added to Christ by baptism, seeing it *might be performed by immersion equally as by aspersion*, especially as they are not said to have been baptised at the same time. The essential act of baptising in the second century, consisted not in sprinkling, but in immersion into water in the name of each person in the Trinity. Concerning immersion, the words and phrases that are used sufficiently testify; and that it was performed in a river, a pool, or a fountain. To the essential rites of baptism, pertained, in the third century, immersion, and not aspersion; except in cases of necessity, and it was accounted a half perfect baptism. Immersion, in the fourth century, was one of those acts that were considered as essential to baptism, nevertheless aspersion was used in the last moments of life, on such as were called clinics; and also where there was not a sufficient quantity of water."

Bishop Taylor says, "The custom of the ancient churches *was not sprinkling, but immersion*; in pursuance of the sense of the word *baptise* in the commandment and the example of our blessed Saviour. Now this was of so sacred account in their esteem, they did not account it lawful to receive *him* into the clergy who had been only sprinkled in his baptism, as

we learn from the epistle of Cornelius to Fabius of Antioch apud Euseb.”—*Ductor dubit. b. iii. c. 4.*

Curcellæus; “Baptism was performed by plunging the whole body into water, and not by sprinkling a few drops as is now the practice; for John was baptising in Enon near to Salem, because there was much water; and they came and were baptised. Nor did the disciples that were sent out by Christ administer afterwards in any other way: and this is more agreeable to the signification of the ordinance. (*Rom. vi. 4.*) I am therefore of opinion, *that we should endeavour to restore and introduce this primitive rite of immersion.*”

Martene declares “that in all the ritual books or pontifical manuscripts, ancient or modern, that he had seen, *immersion is required*; except by the Cenomanensian, and that of a more modern date, in which pouring on the head is mentioned. In the Council of Ravenna also, held in the year 1311, both immersion and pouring are left to the determination of the administrator: and the council of Nismes, in the year 1284, permitted pouring if a vessel could not be had, therefore only in case of necessity. The council of Celichith, in the beginning of the 9th century, forbade the pouring of water on the heads of infants, and commanded that they should be immersed in the font. Baptism was administered by immersion in the twelfth

century. In the thirteenth century, baptism was administered by immersion thrice repeated, yet so that one immersion was esteemed sufficient, as appears from Angerius de Montfaucon. That was a singular synodal appointment under John de Zurich, Bishop of Utrecht, in the year 1291, which runs thus ;—‘We appoint, that the head be put three times in the water, unless the child be weak, or sickly, or the season cold ; then water may be poured by the hand of the priest on the head of the child, lest by plunging, or coldness, or weakness, the child should be injured and die.’ This is a statute of the Synod of Utrecht, with my Lord Bishop John de Zurich at the head of it—*The Book* says nothing about baptising sickly infants, nor of pouring water upon the head !”

Witsius says, *First*, “it is certain, that both John, and the disciples of Christ, ordinarily used dipping ; whose example was followed by the ancient church, as Vossius and Hornbrook in their treatises on baptism, have shown from many testimonies both of the Greeks and Latins. *Secondly*, it cannot be denied but the native signification of the words βάπτειν and βαπτίζειν is to plunge or dip, so as to be altogether something more than ἐπιπολάζειν to float on the surface ; but less than δύνειν to go to the bottom and perish : as Vossius remarks, however, I have observed that the term κατάδυσις going to the bottom is

frequently used by the ancient church in the matter of baptism; Athanasius, Quest. 94.—καταδύσαι τὸ παιδίον ἐν τῇ κολυμβήθρα the going down or dipping the child in the bath; and so Sozomen, lib. vi. cap. 26, has charged Eunomius with heresy for teaching that “the sacrament of baptism ought to be performed by once dipping.” Similar examples are every where to be met with. Salmasius, in his observations on Sulpitius Severus de vita Martini, c. xv. has made the following observation, “βάπτειν from which βαπτίζειν signifies immersion and *not aspersion*: nor did the ancients baptise any but by dipping either once or thrice; except Clinics or persons confined to a sick bed, because these were baptised in a manner they could bear; not in an entire font, as they who put their head under water, but their body was sprinkled all over.” Cypr. iv. Epist. 7.—“Thus when Novatus, in his sickness, received baptism, he was but sprinkled all over.” *Thirdly*, Nor are we to conceal that there is a greater copiousness of signification, and a fuller similitude between the sign and the thing signified, in immersion.”

In another place the same author observes, “With respect to the ceremonies in the administration, we are distinctly to take notice, first of the immersion into the water, and the washing that is the consequence of it; secondly, the continuing under the water; thirdly, the

emersion out of the water. These rites referred, either to the remembrance of those things which Christ underwent, or signify the benefit which Christ bestows upon us, or put us in mind of our duty. First therefore, the immersion into the water represents to us that tremendous abyss of divine justice in which Christ was plunged for a time in some measure, in consequence of his undertaking for our sins; as he complained under the type of David. (*Ps.* lxix. 2.) ‘I sink in deep waters where there is no standing; I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me.’ But more particularly, an immersion of this kind deprives us of the benefits of the light, and the other enjoyments of this world; so it is a very fit representation of the death of Christ. The continuing, how short soever, under the water, represents his burial and the lowest degree of humiliation, when he was thought to be wholly cut off, while in the grave. The emersion, or coming out of the water gives us some resemblance of his resurrection or victory obtained in his death over death, which he vanquished within its inmost recesses, even the grave: all these particulars the Apostle intimates *Rom. vi. 3, 4.*¹

Dr. Campbell says, “I am sorry to observe that the popish translators from the Vulgate

¹ See *Econ. Cov.* vol. ii. book 4. chap. 16.

have shown greater veneration for the style of that version than the generality of protestant translators have shown for that of the original : for in this, the Latin is not more explicit than the Greek : yet so inconsistent are the interpreters last mentioned, that none of them have scrupled to render ἐν τῷ Ιορδάνῃ in the 6th verse, *in Jordan*, though nothing can be plainer than *that if there be any incongruity* in the expression *in water*, this *in Jordan*, must be *equally incongruous*. But they have seen that the preposition *in* could not be avoided there, without adopting a circumlocution, and saying, *with the water of Jordan*, which would have made their deviation from the text too glaring. The word βαπτίζεν both in sacred authors, and in classical, signifies to dip, to plunge, to immerse, and was rendered by Tertullian, the oldest of the Latin Fathers, *tingere*, the term used for dying cloth, which was by immersion. It is always construed suitably to this meaning : thus it is ἐν ὕδατι *in water*, ἐν τῷ Ιορδάνῃ *in the Jordan* ; but I should not lay much stress on the preposition ἐν, which answering to the Hebrew ׀, may denote *with* as well as *in* ; did not the whole phraseology in regard to this ceremony, concur in evincing the same thing. Accordingly the baptised are said ἀναβαίνειν *to arise, emerge, or ascend*, verse 16. ἀπὸ τοῦ ὕδατος, and Acts viii. 39. ἐκ τοῦ ὕδατος *from out of the water*. Let it be observed further, that

the verbs 'παίνω and 'πανρίζω used in scripture for sprinkling, are never construed in this manner. "I will sprinkle you with clean water," says God, Ezek. xxxvi. 25. or as it runs in the English translation, literally from the Hebrew "I will sprinkle clean water upon you", is in the Septuagint *πανω εφ' υμας καθαρον υδωρ* and not as *βαπτίζω* is always construed *πανω υμας εν καθαρω υδατι*, I will sprinkle you in clean water. See also Exod. xxix. 21. Lev. vi. 27. xvi. 14;—had *βαπτίζω* been here employed in the sense of 'παίνω *I sprinkle*, which as far as I know, it never is, in any use, sacred or classical, the expression would doubtless have been *εγω μεν βαπτίζω εφ' υμας υδωρ*, or *απο του υδατος* I indeed baptise water upon you, agreeably to the examples referred to. When therefore the Greek word is *adopted*, I may say rather than *translated* into modern language, the mode of construction ought to be preserved so far as may conduce to suggest its original import. It is to be regretted that we have so much evidence that even good and learned men allow their judgements to be warped by the sentiments and customs of the sect which they prefer.—*Note on Matt. iii. 11.*

The same writer observes in another work, "I have heard a disputant of this stamp, in defiance of etymology and use, maintain that the word, rendered in the New Testament *baptise*, means more properly *to sprinkle*, than

to plunge; and in defiance of all antiquity, that the former method was the earliest, and for many centuries, the most general practice in baptising. One who argues in this manner, never fails, with persons of knowledge, to betray the cause he would defend; and though, with respect to the vulgar, bold assertions generally succeed as well as arguments, sometimes better; yet a candid mind will disdain to take the help of a falsehood even in support of the truth.”—*Lect. on Pulpit Eloquence*, p. 480.¹

The above quotations from the writings of the most eminent pædobaptists, fully demonstrate that immersion was the ancient and universal practice of the Christian Church in the administration of baptism; and that it is *that mode* which is still most agreeable to the meaning of the word, the spirit of the commission, and the design of the institution. After such concessions, how truly pitiable it is to see Protestants torturing the language of Scripture, to extort evidence in favour of a popish innovation—an innovation which the church of Rome candidly confesses to be founded on human tradition. Well might Dr. Campbell express his regret that “the generality of protestant translators have shown less veneration for the style of the Greek text, than the popish translators have for

¹ Some of the above quotations are from Booth’s *Pædobaptism Examined*, where the Reader will find the works mentioned from which they are taken.

that of the Vulgate." In fact, the Papists are willing to admit the truth of those scriptural statements, which so many protestants are either ashamed or afraid to own; "That Christ was baptised *in* the river Jordan," and that "Philip and the eunuch went down *into* the water;" nor have *they* any thing to fear from this avowal, since they do not rest infant sprinkling upon any command or example in the New Testament, but upon the tradition and practice of the church; which they hold to be of equal authority with the Scriptures. And can protestants, with all their ingenuity, obtain for this favorite rite a higher precedent than the church of Rome? Let the church of Rome speak for herself, on this subject, in the person of one of her Bishops;—"Indeed *protestants are found* to have recourse to the *tradition of the church*, for determining a great number of points which are left doubtful by the sacred text, particularly with respect to the two sacraments which they acknowledge. From *the doctrine and practice of the church alone* (the church of Rome) they learn, that although *Christ our pattern* was baptised *in a river*, (*Mark* i. 9.) and the Ethiopian eunuch was led by St. Philip *into the water* (*Acts* viii. 38.) for the same purpose; yet the application of it by affusion or aspersion, is valid; and that although Christ says, "*He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved,*"

(*Mark xvi. 16.*) *infants* are susceptible of the benefits of baptism, *who are not capable of making an act of faith* : with what pretensions to consistency then can they reject her doctrine and practice in the remaining particulars, &c.¹?”

Hence we see that infant sprinkling is acknowledged to be a human ordinance, taken from the tradition and practice of the most corrupt church in the world ! Could it have been found in any of the precepts of Christ, could it have been deduced from the practice of the Apostles, could it have been elicited by the laws of just criticism from any of those passages which relate to the ordinance of baptism, would not the Romish clergy have discovered it ages ago, possessed as they were of all the necessary means,—and would they in that case have grounded their practice on tradition ? In vain then do protestants attempt to find their scheme of pædobaptism on higher authority than that of the church of Rome ; in vain do they try to explain away the true signification of the sacred text, in support of their hypothesis ; and they may continue to argue from notions of expediency, fitness, and utility—yet after all, it remains, what the church of Rome says it is, *a rite founded on tradition*, and we know one

¹ See Dr. Milner's *End of all Controversy*, Letter 39.

who hath said “Thus do ye transgress the commandment, and make the word of God of none effect, through your traditions.”

Since then it has been acknowledged by papists and protestants, that the *mode has been changed* from dipping to sprinkling, is it not extremely probable that the *subject* has been changed also? We shall now proceed to the examination of this point by inquiring,

Thirdly, Who are the proper subjects of baptism.

This branch of our discourse relates to an important part of the revealed will of Christ, stands intimately connected with the primitive constitution of the christian church, and has been greatly obscured by the prevailing practice of sprinkling infants; for these reasons it is needful that we should consider it minutely.

We have already shown from the testimony of pædobaptists themselves, that immersion was the primitive mode, and that this was exchanged for sprinkling by the usurped authority of the church of Rome; is it not then highly probable that the same despotic spirit which produced the hierarchy, changed also the subjects?—for that *these* have been changed, as well as the mode, we shall proceed to prove by an attentive examination of the several particulars stated in the New Testament respecting those whom the Apostles baptised.

Consider first, the persons of whom our Lord speaks in his commission.

It is remarkable that the passage from which we derive our authority for baptising believers, is that from which our opponents attempt to deduce arguments for sprinkling infants. Each party may feel persuaded that the truth is on his side, yet one must be wrong ; for it is impossible that the sacred text can authorize two systems so irreconcilably opposed to each other in principle, spirit, and consequences ; nor can two rites which are at such extreme points of variance be both of divine appointment.

If it be contended that the words “teach all nations baptising them”, include infants, yet do not the several particulars, mentioned by the other Evangelists, expose the fallacy of such an idea ? Each of the historians, who has recorded the commission, exhibits some prominent feature of our Lord’s command : let us harmonize their statements, and we shall find that the *subjects* of baptism are as plainly designated as the ordinance itself. Matthew says, “go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost ; *teaching them* to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” Mark says, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature ; *he that believeth and is baptised*, shall be saved” ; and

though Luke does not mention baptism, yet he clearly shows what was included in preaching the Gospel, for he informs us that the Lord commanded “repentance and remission of sins to be preached in his name, among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem”. These writers agree as to the *substance* of Christ’s command ; only Mark and Luke mention some things which Matthew omits. He simply says, that the Apostles were to go and teach all nations ; but Mark shows *how they were to teach them*, by “preaching the Gospel” ; and Luke mentions the particular doctrines on which they were to insist,—“repentance and remission of sins through faith in the name of Jesus.” Again, while Matthew says that they were to baptise as well as teach, Mark fills up the ellipsis by observing that the persons whom the Apostles were to baptise were *believers*. Thus the phrase “baptising them”, used by the former Evangelist, and so widely interpreted by pædo-baptists, is by Mark expressly limited to *them that believe* ; and can therefore by no means be supposed to include all nations. In support of this opinion we observe that the pronoun *αὐτούς* *them* is masculine, and *does not agree* with *πάντα τὰ ἔθνη* *all nations*, which is neuter, but with *μαθητάς* *disciples*, a masculine noun, understood in connexion with the verb *μαθητεύσατε* *make disciples*. “Go ye therefore, make disciples among

all nations, *baptising them* (the disciples) in the name of the Father, &c.”

Independent of the grammatical construction, which is sufficient to decide the case, nothing can be more preposterous than to imagine that our Lord sent forth his Apostles to baptise whole nations, irrespective of their believing in his name; or that he intended by the command “teach all nations”, that his ministers should sprinkle the face of every child as soon as it is born, and thereby constitute it a partaker of covenant blessings! We therefore contend that whatever inferences the pædobaptists may draw in favour of their theory from the words of Matthew, they are rendered perfectly nugatory by the words of Mark, who restricts the ordinance to believers only: nor can any system of reasoning, however specious, founded upon the principles of analogy, expediency, or the moral fitness of things, overthrow the objection which this Evangelist opposes to the practice of infant sprinkling, since he most unequivocally makes faith an essential condition of christian baptism.

The admission of this fact led to that *vicarious profession* which in the primitive church always accompanied the baptism of babes, and which has attended the administration of this ceremony from its commencement to the present time: hear Dr. Wall on this subject, “But

the most material thing by far that was done at baptism was *the professions*, the sincerity whereof is more to be regarded than the external baptism itself, as St. Peter testifies I. Pet. iii. 21. They were constantly and universally required, in the case of grown persons, to be made with their own mouth in the most serious manner; and, in the case of infants, by their sponsors in their name. That a man may justly wonder at the spirit of contradiction in those people" (we presume Independents and Presbyterians,) "that pretend baptism does better without them, and do practise accordingly." And again, "There is no time or age of the church in which there is any appearance that infants were ordinarily baptised without sponsors or Godfathers; and Austin calls the professions, words of the sacrament without which an infant cannot be baptised". Thus then, according to the decided opinion of the great historian of pædobaptism, the baptism of Independents and Presbyterians is invalid!

As this vicarious profession is one of the original, so it is one of the most absurd features of pædobaptism. What can be more opposed to the dictates of reason, and the solemnities of religion, than the baptismal service of ecclesiastical establishments? When an infant was

¹ See Wall on Infant Baptism, part I. chap. ix. p. 324, 353.

brought to a minister of the church of England to be baptised, he prays that "the infant coming to his holy baptism may receive remission of sins by spiritual regeneration; that God, according to his promise, would give to those who ask, let them that seek, find, and open the gate unto them that knock; that this infant may enjoy the everlasting benediction of his heavenly washing, and come to his eternal kingdom." Then *he addresses the sponsors*, "Ye have brought this child here to be baptised. As Christ will most surely keep and perform his promise, this infant must also faithfully for his part, promise by you that are his sureties, (until he come of age to take it upon himself,) that he will renounce the devil and all his works, and constantly believe God's holy word, and obediently keep his commandments: I demand therefore, dost thou in the name of this child renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, and the carnal desires of the flesh, &c.?" To which they severally reply, "*I will renounce them.*" "Dost thou believe in God the father, and in Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost?" "*All this I stedfastly believe.*" "Wilt thou be baptised in this faith?" "*This is my desire.*" Remember it is *the unconscious babe* who is about to be baptised, and by the law of the church of England it is *he* that is required to profess faith in the Lord Jesus, but because

of his entire incapacity to fulfil this requirement she provides sponsors who present themselves as sureties to God for the faith and obedience of the child. Who, that was a stranger to this mysterious plan of substitution, would not conclude that the sponsors were the persons about to be baptised in the faith they had so solemnly professed? Is not this lying in the presence of God? Is it not trifling with his ordinance? Is it not offering insult to the dignity of the christian religion? Yet this is called *holy baptism*, and is professedly grounded upon the words of our Lord, "Go ye, teach all nations, baptising them"; but do these words indeed countenance the practice of sprinkling babes on the faith of sponsors or of parents? We would appeal to men of common sense, let them decide this matter.

If this text proves any thing in favour of pædobaptism, it proves too much. If it can be shown that it contains a law for the baptism of infants, undoubtedly the infants of all nations are included, pagan and mahometan, as well as christians; and that system must be unjust and arbitrary which makes their right to this ordinance to depend upon the faith of parents or sponsors. "Teach all nations, *baptising them*;" if it can be proved that this means "baptising the *infants* of all nations," why do not pædobaptist missionaries make the sprinkling of babes the

first object of their attention ; why do they not bring all they can into the pale of the visible church, and bestow on them covenant blessings ? It would be difficult to show, even upon their own ground, why some infants are thus favoured, and others excluded. Are not the children of all nations alike naturally and morally capacitated for baptism ? Do they not equally need the spiritual benefits said to be conveyed by this ordinance ? Would it not be quite as effectual to the salvation of infants born in heathen lands, as to others ? Should it be replied, that baptism belongs to believers and their seed only, (and this we know is said by many,) we ask, why then in so many instances administer it to the offspring of unbelievers ? If the children of merely nominal christians in this country are fit subjects for baptism, if the unbelief and immorality of their parents does not invalidate the ordinance to them, why should the children of Pagans, Mahometans, Jews, and infidels, be excluded from the benefits of this rite, in cases where it could be administered to them ? We are at a loss to imagine upon what principle the seed of unbelievers in England, France, or Rome, are entitled to baptism, more than the children of the Heathen, seeing that their parents are alike enemies to God, and in a state of condemnation !

Consider secondly, the persons whom the Apostles baptised.

Had the baptism of babes been practised by Christ, or included in the commission, the Apostles would have left upon record some testimony of the fact: but in examining the history of apostolic baptisms, *children are not once mentioned*. If the Apostles did baptise infants, how utterly unaccountable is this silence, in a history so minute, definite, and important, and in which the administration of this ordinance is recorded no less than nine times!

On the day of pentecost when Peter preached his memorable sermon;—“Now when *they heard this*, they were pricked in their hearts, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the Apostles, men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, repent and be baptised every one of you in the name of the Lord Jesus, for the remission of sins: and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. Then *they that gladly received his word were baptised.*” (*Acts* ii. 38–42.) Peter and the rest of the Apostles were now entering upon the work assigned them in the commission. *Mark how they began μαθητεύειν* to teach, or make disciples, *not by baptising*, but by preaching: they proclaimed salvation through a crucified Saviour;

they warned the Jews of their awful condition; they exhorted them to repent; and they *baptised those who believed*, to the number of three thousand. Observe what is said of those whom they baptised, “they gladly received the word—they then continued stedfastly in the Apostle’s doctrine, and in fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayer; and were continually in the temple, praising God.”

It is evident to a demonstration that the three thousand baptised on this occasion, *were all of them adults*, for they are said to have performed acts of which infants are incapable. If then the infants of these converts were admitted to the ordinance on the faith of their parents, as pædobaptists would induce us to believe, there must, upon a moderate calculation, have been *some thousands more baptised* than the Apostles have stated. How is this omission, which impeaches the accuracy of the historian, to be accounted for?

We are told that the baptism of the children is expressly referred to in the 39th verse, where it is said “the promise is unto you, and *to your children*”; and that in order to overthrow this decisive testimony in favour of pædobaptism, we are compelled to have recourse to a “most grossly absurd”, if not a wilful perversion, of the sacred text. Now this absurd perversion of scripture which is charged upon us, consists

in our referring “the promise”, here spoken of, to the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost : but we are not the only persons who come under this charge ; many pædobaptist commentators have adopted the same heretical opinion.

Dr. Doddridge, in a note upon this passage, says, “Considering that the gift of the Spirit had been mentioned just before, it seems most natural to interpret *this*, as a reference to that passage in Joel, which had been so largely recited above, (*verse 17, and fol.*) where God promises the effusion of the spirit on their sons and on their daughters ; and accordingly, I have paraphrased the latter clause of this verse as referring to his extraordinary gifts ; and the rather, as the sanctifying influences of the Spirit must have already been received, to prepare them for entering into the church by baptism.”

And Dr. Whitby observes, “These words will not prove a right of infants to receive baptism : the promise mentioned here, being that only of the Holy spirit, mentioned in verses 16, 17, 18. and so relating only to the times of the miraculous effusion of the Holy Ghost, and to those persons who by age were made capable of those extraordinary gifts.”

But if this application of the passage were peculiar to the baptists, it does not merit the epithets employed against it : for it agrees with

the event which had so recently transpired ; with the grand subject of the Apostle's discourse ; and with the order he pursues. The glorious manifestation of the Spirit to the church of God, was predicted as a distinguishing blessing of the new Covenant : to this great and invaluable promise of the Father, Christ frequently referred in his discourse at the last supper ; (*John*, c. xiv, xv, xvi.) and just before his ascension, he told his disciples to wait at Jerusalem for *this promise*, which, saith he, " ye have heard of me ;" and Peter himself declares what he meant, by referring immediately to the gift of the Holy Ghost, as that which the Father had promised to bestow in the last days. v. 16, 17, 18, and 33.

But this opinion which, let it be remembered, is as prevalent among pædobaptists, as among us, is nevertheless held up to public ridicule, as one of the false glosses by which we endeavour to weaken every species of evidence, which militates against our " darling hypothesis". " What can be more absurd", say our opponents, " than to suppose that the promise mentioned by Peter refers to the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, when every one knows that infants are naturally and morally incapable of receiving and exercising such gifts ?" True ! but what baptist ever supposed for a moment, that Peter had any reference whatever to

unconscious babes? And who, that is not bent upon establishing a system, in defiance of plain truth and right reason, could find any thing about infant baptism in the words of this Apostle? The phrase “*καὶ τοῖς τέκνοις ὑμῶν* and *your children*” does not mean babes or infants, as the independents say it does, when defending their practice of sprinkling children: *τέκνον* signifies a descendant, one of any degree of age or consanguinity, and not merely infants; indeed it will be found most generally to mean posterity. Thus, Matt. iii. 9; “Think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our Father; for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones *ἐγείρει τέκνα τῷ Ἀβραάμ* to raise up a posterity to Abraham.” Matt. xxvii. 25;—“then answered all the people and said, his blood be on us *καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ τέκνα ἡμῶν* and on our posterity.” Luke xxiii. 28;—“Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, *καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ τέκνα ὑμῶν* and for your posterity.”¹ But the passage which serves to illustrate very strongly the one under consideration is Acts xiii. 32, 33; “And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the Fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us, *τοῖς τέκνοις αὐτῶν* their descendants,” certainly *not their infants*. So when it is said, “The promise is

¹ See also John viii. 29.

unto you, and to *your children*," it does not mean *your babes*, but your *descendants*, your *posterity*; and is happily expounded by the succeeding clause, "even as many," *not as shall be born*, but "even as *many of them* as the Lord your God *shall call*."

But how shall we account for the conduct of those who charge us so loudly with adopting an absurd interpretation for the support of our sentiments, when the most celebrated pædo-baptists themselves, (such men as Hammond, Whitby, Limborch, &c.) pronounce the arguments taken from this text in favour of infant baptism, to be entirely nugatory?

The next account of baptism we meet with, is in Acts viii. 12;—"Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people, with one accord, gave heed unto the things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. And there was great joy in that city. But *when they believed* Philip, preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus, *they were baptised, men and women*."

Here we find Philip, like the Apostles, proceeding according to the rules of the commission. He began by preaching the gospel, and testifying to the Samaritans the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus; *when they believed* his word, he baptised them,

both men and women. Surely it is evident that the ordinance of baptism was restricted on this occasion at least, to those who were of age to hear, understand and believe the gospel: but according to the pædobaptists, the seed of believers, the *children of those Samaritan converts*, must also have had a right to the ordinance, *and if so*, why did not Philip baptise them, or if he did, why is it not said that he baptised men, women, and *children*?

The fact is, that a *personal* profession of faith was an absolute condition of christian baptism; nor is there an instance recorded of any being baptised who were not capable of exercising and professing faith in the Lord Jesus. This was manifest in the case of the eunuch; “Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they” (Philip and the eunuch) “went on their way, they came unto a certain water; and the eunuch said, see here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptised? and Philip said, *if thou believest* with all thine heart, thou mayest.” Here, as before, the Evangelist began with preaching Christ: and he did not baptise him, till he had professed faith in the Lord Jesus;—“I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God”; *then* “Philip commanded the chariot to stand still, and they both went down into the water, both Philip and the

eunuch, and he baptised him." We do not read of any other receiving the ordinance at this time; neither children nor servants are said to have been baptised on the faith of this individual.

In the 9th chapter of Acts, we have a record of the baptism of Saul.—“And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him, said, brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, who appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales, and he received sight forthwith, and arose and was baptised.” This is additional evidence in favour of our opinion, that none but those who professed faith in Christ, were baptised in primitive times; and that it was the indispensable duty of all who believed, to comply with the command, “Why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptised.”

We now proceed to examine the circumstances connected with the baptism of Cornelius and his friends. Acts x. 34, &c.—“Then Peter opened his mouth and said, of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation, he that feareth him and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. The word which God sent unto the children of

Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ,—he is Lord of all—that word I say you know, which was published throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached: and he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify, that it is he who was ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead; to him give all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him, shall receive remission of sins. While Peter yet spake these words, the *Holy Ghost fell on all them who heard the word*. And they of the circumcision who believed, were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they *heard them speak with tongues*, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptised, who have received the Holy Ghost? And he commanded them to be baptised in the name of the Lord.”

Let the impartial reader carefully notice each particular recorded in this history, and then let him say whether he can find the shadow of evidence in favour of infant sprinkling. It is said of Cornelius himself that he was a “devout man,” given to much prayer and to alms deeds; and of his household, that “they feared God:” he deputed two of his household, and a

“devout soldier,” to go to Joppa, to fetch Simon; and he assembled his religious friends and acquaintances together, to hear the word of the Lord from the mouth of the Apostle; “we are all here,” said he, “present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.” Now observe how exactly the Apostle’s present conduct accords with his former practice, and with the rules prescribed in the commission; to which he appeals for his authority, as the messenger of the Lord; “And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.” While this Apostle was thus preaching pardon through faith in a crucified Saviour; and while Cornelius and his friends, were listening with ardour to this sacred truth; the Holy Ghost descended upon them, and endued them with miraculous gifts—and those persons who *heard his word*, and who were endued with the Holy Ghost, are the persons whom Peter commanded *to be baptised* in the name of the Lord. Is there any possible mode of reasoning which can infer the baptism of infants, from this statement? Does not every word throughout the whole, militate against the system?

We find the sixth example of apostolic baptism, Acts xvi. 13—16;—“And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where

prayer was wont to be made: and we sat down, and spake unto the women who resorted thither. And a certain woman, named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, who worshipped God, heard us; whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended to the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptised, and her household, she besought us, saying, if ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there: and she constrained us."

Facts are stubborn things—and *it is a fact*, that there is not one word about children, from the beginning to the end of this history! Before the pædobaptists profess to derive support in favour of their theory from this document, they should prove that Lydia was a married woman, that she had young children, that they were with her at Philippi, and that they were baptised by the Apostle,—*till they have demonstrated* these things, (and the *onus probandi* lies on them) we deny that they can derive from this example any authority for their practice of sprinkling infants.

Whitby says, in his paraphrase of this passage, that "when Lydia and *those of her household* were instructed in the christian faith, and in the nature of baptism required by it, she was baptised, and her household." This explication completely excludes infants, for *they* could

not have received *that instruction*, which according to this pædobaptist commentator, was imparted to *her household*, as well as to herself!

The baptism of the jailor, and his household, is recorded in the same chapter, from the 30th to the 34th verse ;—“ And *he* said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved ? And they said, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to *all that were in his house*. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes ; and was baptised, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.”

It appears from this statement that the jailor's family consisted of persons in the full exercise of their understandings, that they believed the testimony of the Apostle, and were capable of professing faith in the doctrines which he preached. “ Paul and Silas spake the word of the Lord unto him, and to *all that were in his house* ; they exhorted him, and all that were with him, to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and he, and *all that were in his house*, believed, were baptised, and rejoiced in God.” The argument drawn from the use of the singular participle (*πιστευσάντων* *he believing*) that his household were baptised on *his* profession of faith, is

rendered nugatory by the recurrence of the singular form of the verb in the subsequent relation. He and *his house* *πεπιστευκώς* believing; he and *his house* *ἐβαπτίσθη* were baptised; he and *his house* *ἠγαλλίασατο* rejoiced. Neither can it be supposed that eternal salvation was secured to his household, upon *his* believing the testimony of the Apostle. Dr. Doddridge's observations on this passage are much to the purpose; "The meaning cannot be that the eternal salvation of his family would be secured by *his* faith; but that his believing in Christ, would be the best security of his family from present danger; and that if they also themselves believed, they would be entitled to the same spiritual and everlasting blessings with himself." If then, the jailor's faith did not give his family a title to eternal life; if it did not secure to them, the enjoyment of spiritual blessings; upon what principle could it give them a right to baptism, which, according to the independents, is the outward seal of those blessings?

We conclude, therefore, from the whole account, that he and his household *believed*; and that on their individual profession of faith in the Lord Jesus, he and his household were baptised.

In Acts xviii. 8. we read of certain Corinthians who were baptised by Paul;—"And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the

Lord, with all his house : and many of the Corinthians hearing, believed, and were baptised.”

And in I. Cor. i. 14—16. he says, “ I thank God that I baptised none of you, but Crispus and Gaius ; lest any should say that I had baptised in mine own name. And I baptised also the household of Stephanus ; besides, I know not whether I baptised any other.” And again, in the 16th chapter ;—“ Ye know the house of Stephanus, that it is the first fruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints.”

In these cases, as in those already adduced, we find a strict regard to the *order* laid down in commission,—teaching preceded baptism ; and none were baptised but those who professed faith in Christ. It is said that the Corinthians “ heard the word, that they believed, and were baptised.” Of the household of Crispus it is said, that “ he believed on the Lord, *with all his οἶκος family*” (so Grotius, Doddridge, and others have rendered οἶκος in a variety of instances). And of the household of Stephanus it is said, “ that they were devoted to the ministry of the saints” ; being employed, either in preaching the gospel, or in succouring the saints under trial and affliction.

Dr. Macknight observes upon this passage, that “ the family of Stephanus *seem all to have been adults, when they were baptised.*” And

surely what is said of the family of Crispus affords us strong evidence of their being adults, when they were baptised; for they all believed in the Lord!

We shall only notice further the baptism of certain disciples at Ephesus. Acts xix. 1--7;—
 “And it came to pass, that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts, came to Ephesus; and finding certain disciples, he said unto them, have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, we have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, unto what then were ye baptised? and they said, unto John’s baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptised with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard *this*, they were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid *his* hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied. And all the men were about twelve.”

It is not our present purpose to enter into the controversy respecting these disciples who were baptised a second time; (about this the most learned commentators are divided,) but we shall briefly remark that they possessed those

qualifications, which rendered them proper subjects for the ordinance; they were adults; they were called disciples; they had been instructed under the ministry of John; and they are said to have believed.

We have before stated the theory of pædobaptism, as it has been laid down by its various advocates; and we shall now proceed to examine the consequences which flow from it, the period when the practice first appeared, and the principles on which at different times it has been defended.

In the first place, this theory tends to lessen the importance of the Christian revelation. *To us* it appears evident that the ordinances of Christ's church are founded upon his authority and are illustrated by precedents drawn from the New Testament; this the pædobaptists virtually deny, by appealing to an abrogated rite of the Old Testament dispensation in defence of their practice: but why draw an argument from this source, if the validity of infant sprinkling can be proved from the christian Revelation? Is it not fair to infer that a rite which cannot be established on this ground, is not an ordinance of the gospel dispensation? We estimate as highly, and believe as firmly, as any of our opponents, the truths of the Old Testament scriptures; but we deny their sufficiency to direct us in the administration of gospel ordinances.

Christ is the sole legislator of his church, and he has given his word, "whereunto we do well to take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place."

The church of Rome borrows her mitred priests, and smoking incense from the splendid ceremonies of the Mosaic economy: the church of England, her vestments, her altar, and her tythes, from the same source: and pædobaptist dissenters profess to derive their reasons for sprinkling infants from a rite of the same abrogated system: but neither of them recognize the principle, to its full extent, that the New Testament scriptures contain within themselves every thing that is essential to our faith and practice.

Surely to maintain that pædobaptism is a divine rite of the *New Covenant*, and yet to appeal to *the writings of Moses* for its authority, is to question the sufficiency and importance of the christian Revelation; and implies that it is not competent to direct us in the administration of its own institutions. We consider the law of baptism to be as independent of the law of circumcision, as the Lord's supper is of the passover; and in both cases, it appears to us, that Christ has given perfect instruction to his followers: and, therefore, it is not only unnecessary, but presumptuous, to go to any other quarter. Such appeals from Christ to Moses

have tended materially to adulterate the truth, to corrupt the practice of the church, and to rob Christ of his glory, as Legislator in Zion.

Again, the *arguments* adduced in support of this theory are not discoverable by the illiterate.

It is an inherent excellence of the christian revelation, that its precepts are expressed in terms and illustrated by examples, familiar to the ignorant as well as the learned: a man of plain understanding, and very limited information, has only to open these sacred records, and attend to the obvious meaning of the words in which their injunctions are delivered, and he will obtain a perfect knowledge of the institutions of Christ, without the aid of commentators or critics. It is a fact in which we glory, and which our opponents, with all their sophistry, cannot refute, that the directions for the observance of believer's baptism, and the arguments for its support, are to be found in the New Testament.

If infant sprinkling were of Christ, would it not admit of proof *as readily* as believers' baptism? Should we not find it supported by some tangible scriptural evidence, that would carry conviction to the mind of the illiterate? But in vain does a reader of this description come to the New Testament to establish the right of his infants to baptism; in vain does he seek from thence, authority for the administration of this

ceremony ; he cannot find it among the laws of Christ ; he has no precedent for it in the Acts of the Apostles ; and unlike every institution of the gospel, it rests upon a species of evidence, not within the grasp of ordinary capacities.

It is manifest from the mode of defence adopted by the advocates of this theory, that it can only be made to appear plausible by a laborious process of moral reasoning, and by inferences drawn from very remote premises. The man who can read the New Testament in no language but his own, whose early prejudices and habits so strongly favour infant sprinkling, that he either cannot or will not believe the plain record of the fact, that men and women only were immersed by the Apostles, must follow the learned through many perplexed and doubtful discussions : he must study the nature and design of the Abrahamic Covenant, the relation it bears to the present dispensation, and the points in which they are agreed ; he must understand the law of circumcision, why it was given, who were the subjects of it, and what were the blessings it sealed to them ; and then draw this logical conclusion, that *because Abraham*, by a positive divine command, circumcised his male children on the eighth day, *he* without a command is to sprinkle his female children on any day he pleases : he must be acquainted with the different modes of purification used

under the law ; know what things were made clean by sprinkling, and what by immersion ; and because Moses sprinkled the vessels of the tabernacle, he is to infer that sprinkling is the proper mode of administering baptism : he must inquire diligently about proselyte baptism from the works of those learned men who have read the Talmud and Maimonides ; and finding by their account that the children of proselytes were baptised with their parents, he is to receive this opinion, as a warrant for the baptism of his own children : he must learn from some one, who will read the fathers for him, *when* this practice arose, and by what arguments they defended it ; and he must be careful to observe and remember, that the terms, to *proselyte*, to *regenerate*, to *sanctify*, in those places where *an infant is the relative*, are used figuratively for baptise, and are always to be construed in favour of infant baptism. And finally, he must believe, what is contrary to truth, and to the opinion of learned men in all ages, that the original word from which we derive baptism, signifies not only to immerse, but also to pour and to sprinkle ; and that this last is as genuine a signification as the first.

This is no exaggerated account of the arguments by which we have heard Independents labour to establish the divine right of infant sprinkling ; *their having recourse to such*, abun-

dantly proves, that this system is unsupported by scriptural evidence. Are these arguments discoverable by the great bulk of professing Christians? Can that institution be of Christ which requires such a circuitous method of proof? The baptism of believers needs no such defence; it occupies a distinguished place among the ordinances of divine worship, and brings with it directions for its observance, as well as evidence of its authority!

Again, the theory of pædobaptism is only adapted to the constitution of a *national church*; it has a manifest tendency to unite the church and the world, and is therefore necessarily opposed to the spirit and principles of dissent. Why do we dissent from the church of England? because it is an ecclesiastical political institution, which in its constitution and government is diverse from that kingdom which is not of this world. We believe that the church of Christ is congregational, composed of persons professing faith in his name; that its laws are derived from the sacred canon of the New Testament; that its jurisdiction is spiritual; and that the Lord Jesus is its head: but not so a national church—she records as her members, all the subjects of the realm, the greater part of whom are strangers to God, and enemies to true religion; her christianity is political; her dominion is secular; her laws emanate from some worldly prince or

ambitious pontiff, who is constituted her head ; his sceptre is the organ of government ; his creed the standard of her faith.

To *such a church*, pædobaptism is an appropriate, nay an essential appendage. It is that mystic rite by which the king and the subject, the saint and the infidel, are incorporated into one body, and are alike pronounced children of God, members of Christ, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven ! It is the charm, whose magic spell holds in unison these remote and jarring elements ; it is the seal of priestly dominion over the consciences of men ; the mark by which they are recognized as belonging to that chartered ecclesiastical corporation, which denounces all who dare to question her infallibility as schismatics, heretics and apostates ; as worthy of pains, penalties and death !

And it is quite natural to suppose, that any rite introduced into the christian system upon the broad principle of circumcision, should produce such results as these ; pædobaptism has a direct tendency to augment the power of the church, by an unhallowed confederation with the world ; to destroy that individuality of character and profession, which it is the design of the gospel to maintain ; and to make christianity, what Judaism was, a national religion. It lessens the importance, and in effect, denies the necessity, of faith and repentance, as

pre-requisites to church membership; and it opens a wide door indeed for the admission of profligate characters into the visible kingdom of Christ—nay, by constituting them members of the church, before they can discern between good and evil, it *ensures a succession* of unregenerate profane professing christians.

That such results as these are not visible among pædobaptist dissenters, is simply because they do not pursue their system to its legitimate consequences: *only let them receive the subjects of baptism into church fellowship*, (and why not? — they are as fit for the one as for the other,) the moral qualifications of their members would be of precisely the same character, as are those of the church of England; and let their power be equal to their zeal for this rite, and they would speedily grow into a national church.

Again, another objection to the theory of infant baptism, is the contrariety of opinion which exists among those who yet most cordially espouse its general principle. This implies a deficiency of scriptural evidence to guide their decisions, as well as a want of scriptural law to regulate their practice: nor is this an unfounded assertion; for though they all agree in the general conclusion, that infant baptism is necessary, it is well known that they differ materially as to the premises from which they

draw this conclusion; and that they flatly contradict each other as to many particulars connected with this ceremony. So palpable is this difference of opinion in the history of the present controversy, that we frequently find the most expert and zealous defenders of pædobaptism, not only admitting the great facts from which we reason, but strenuously opposing and laboriously disproving the principles laid down by some of their own party.

They differ among themselves respecting the *mode* of baptising infants. The Greek and oriental churches, which include one half of the christian world, maintain that *immersion* is so essential to the validity of baptism, that a man who has been *sprinkled only* in his infancy is deemed by them unbaptised, and is not admitted to their communion till he has been immersed; and many protestant pædobaptists have been anxious that baptism should be again performed by immersion, from an avowed conviction, in direct opposition to other pædobaptists, that this was the primitive mode, that this alone answers to the design of the ordinance, and that sprinkling is a popish innovation.

Nor is it in reference to the *quantity* of water, and the *manner* of its application only, that they differ, but about the *ceremonies* which are to accompany this rite. The church of Rome consecrates the baptismal water by pouring

into it oil ; she exorcises the child ; puts salt into his mouth, spittle upon his eyes, nose, and ears ; and crosses him on the forehead, neck and breast : the church of England, and all protestant established churches, require a profession of faith to be made by sponsors ; and that the child should be signed with the cross at his baptism ; independents simply sprinkle a little water on the child's face, without regard to any profession of faith : and each of these contend earnestly for their own particular practice in the administration of this rite.

Pædobaptists differ among themselves, as to *whose* children are proper subjects of baptism. Some say that the offspring of pagans, infidels, Jews and Turks, have as just a claim, as the seed of believers ; and that if they fall into the hands of christians, they ought to be introduced into the visible church by this ceremony : others deny this, and maintain that baptism should be restricted to children born in christian countries, because their parents, if not believers, are nevertheless nominal professors of christianity. A third class contend that the offspring of believers, in the evangelical sense of the term, are the only legitimate subjects of baptism ; and that to depart from this rule, is to take the children's meat, and to cast it unto dogs.

From the concessions of pædobaptists, it appears that the *authority* for infant baptism is

the most perplexing part of their theory -- it is not surprising therefore, that on *this point also*, they are much divided among themselves.

Some affirm that this rite rests upon our Lord's commission to disciple all nations, which say they, includes the baptism of infants. Others deny this, and allow that neither the letter nor the spirit of this commission will admit of such an interpretation. A supposed universality of grace, is assigned by some, as a sufficient reason for baptising infants ; while those pædobaptists who believe the doctrine of particular redemption, deny this position altogether, and in their turn bring forward circumcision as scriptural warrant for the practice : others reject circumcision as their authority, and profess to administer this rite on the ground of jewish proselyte baptism—while many discard these jewish ceremonies, and declare, that the *child's personal interest* in the covenant of grace, gives him an undoubted right to baptism : again, this covenant relation is questioned, and the *faith of the parents* is considered as the child's only title to this privilege.

There is yet another party of pædobaptists who disclaim all these authorities, and who consider that the *efficacy of the ordinance itself*, which they believe conveys salvation to its subject, affords an unanswerable reason for its administration ; and by others the *authority of*

the church is pleaded as an infallible guide in this, as in other matters of faith and practice.

Further, pædobaptists differ among themselves, not only about the *mode*, the *ceremonies* which should accompany, and the *authority* for practising, infant baptism, but also about the *end* or *design* of this rite. Upon this point Witsius remarks, "The question relating to the efficacy and usefulness of christian baptism, in reference to the elect infants of parents who are in the covenant, is peculiarly arduous and abstruse: and, as of old, so very lately, it is embarrassed by the subtilty of curious disputes." If it be so difficult to answer the inquiry, "what benefit does baptism confer on *elect infants*?" it must be tenfold more difficult, if not impossible, to shew what end is answered by the baptism of *non-elect infants*. We humbly conceive, that if they are in the covenant, it is their *election*, and not their baptism, that gives them a federal relation to Christ, and makes them one in covenant with God; and to talk of *putting elect infants into covenant*, those whom God hath of his own sovereign will and pleasure, taken into covenant with himself, is something worse than darkening counsel by words without knowledge. And to profess to put *those* into the covenant by baptism, who are not the children of the covenant, and who prove this but too clearly, by determinately rejecting God to the

end of their days, is a presumptuous absurdity !

Viewing either side of the question, *the end* to be answered by this ceremony appears inexplicable. It is this very difficulty, which has produced the great diversity of opinion, prevailing among pædobaptists on the subject ; and it has led their different denominations to assign to it, different degrees of importance, according to the spirit of their individual creeds, and the several forms of their church government.

The Greek and Romish churches represent infant baptism as absolutely essential to salvation. The church of England, with her Calvinistic creed, and Arminian clergy, denies that it is essential to salvation, *yet* boldly affirms that it makes its subject, “a child of God, a member of Christ, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.” The independents, who are tenacious of the principles of dissent, who maintain Calvinistic doctrines, and seek to promote the purity of their churches, contend that baptism brings children into the covenant, but not into the church. Even some of these appear to make this rite necessary to salvation, by accusing us of criminal indifference to the everlasting interests of our children, because we refuse to sprinkle them in their infancy.

We shall now inquire into the origin of this theory. When did the baptism of babes come into practice ? Did it constantly and universally

prevail in the first ages of the christian dispensation?

Upon the closest examination of the inspired writings, we cannot find one passage which leads us to infer, that Christ or his Apostles practised or enjoined this ceremony. It was altogether unknown to the christian church during the first century, according to the concessions of pædobaptists themselves. Luther says, "it cannot be proved by the sacred scriptures, that infant baptism was instituted by Christ, or begun by the first christians after the Apostles." Curcellæus observes, "the baptism of infants in the first two centuries after Christ was altogether unknown; but in the third and fourth centuries was allowed by some few: in the fifth and following ages it was generally received." Episcopius and Limborch maintain that "the necessity of pædobaptism was never asserted in any council, till about the year 418." Nor is the testimony of Suicerus less decided; "no one received baptism during the first two centuries, except he who was instructed in the faith, initiated into the doctrines of Christ, and able to testify that he *believed*, because it is written "*he that believeth and is baptised shall be saved:*" therefore it was necessary in the first place *to believe*—hence arose the order of catechumens in the church. At that time also, the custom was universally and constantly observed, to

give the eucharist to catechumens immediately after their baptism.”

Such is the testimony of men who were pædobaptists ; men of profound learning, extensive research, and well acquainted with the records of early ecclesiastical customs. Such testimony is of itself sufficient to repel the charge of ignorance, bigotry and intolerance, which some independent ministers, with an air of haughty confidence, cast upon us, because we dare to affirm that infant baptism is not to be found among the institutes of Christ.

Since the pædobaptists are anxious to prove the early practice of this rite, with a view to establish its divine authority, we shall examine the nature and force of the evidence which they adduce in favour of its primitive antiquity.

The only fathers of the first century whose writings are extant, are Barnabas, Clemens Romanus, Hermas, Ignatius, and Polycarp : these were cotemporaries with the Apostles ; yet, it is manifest from Dr. Wall's history, that nothing can be gathered from them in support of this practice.

Justin Martyr, who lived in the second century, is the first author quoted in defence of this theory. From him, and he wrote about the year 150, the following passage is selected by Dr. Wall, and I have copied his translation. “I will now declare to you after what manner

we, being made new by Christ, have dedicated ourselves to God ; least if I should leave out that, I might seem to deal unfairly in some part of my apology. They who are persuaded and do believe that these things which are taught by us are true, and do promise to live accordingly to them, are directed first to pray, and ask of God with fasting, the forgiveness of their former sins; and we also pray and fast together with them : then we bring them to some place where there is water ; and they are regenerated by the same way of regeneration by which we were regenerated, for they are washed with water in the name of God the Father, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Ghost.” Dr. Wall, after quoting this passage, adds these remarkable words—“ if I am asked to what purpose I bring in this, in a discourse of infant baptism, my answer is, that I do not produce it as making directly, or immediately either for, or against it : but I bring it in because it is the most ancient account of the way of baptism, next the scriptures, and shews the plain and simple manner of administering it.” An impartial reader will draw a different inference ; he will perceive that this passage not only makes against infant baptism, but that it furnishes us with a powerful argument in favour of our practice. Justin is speaking of those who had attained to the full exercise of their understanding;

he describes them as converted, or made new by Christ; he says that *they dedicated themselves* to God, not that they were dedicated by parents or sponsors; he represents them as being persuaded of the truth of what they heard, as believing that truth, as praying, fasting and promising to live according to the gospel, and he adds, we take them to a place where there is water, and baptise them in the name of the sacred Three.

Now we ask, does this account favour the theory of infant baptism? Does it not on the contrary, most decidedly support the practice of the baptism of believers by immersion? Infants can neither fast, nor pray, nor promise obedience; nor, if they are to be sprinkled, need they be taken to a place where there is water; a little water may easily be brought to them, as is the custom at the present day. As Justin in his apology intended to give the Roman authorities an impartial account of the sentiments, worship and practices of the christians, would he not have mentioned the baptism of infants, if, at the time in which he wrote, such a rite existed?

There is another passage of the same writer, which Dr. Wall has thus translated: "Several persons among us of sixty or seventy years old, of both sexes, who were discipled to Christ in their childhood, do continue uncorrupted."

From which it is inferred that the discipling of these persons in childhood, means, that they were baptised in their infancy. Justin's words are, *οἱ ἐκ παιδῶν ἐμαθητεύθησαν τῷ Χριστῷ* who *from* their childhood have been disciplined to Christ, or instructed in his doctrines. The verb *μαθητεύω* as used in the New Testament, and in the writings of the Greek fathers, is declared by the first critics, to include the act of teaching, to make disciples by instruction. Thus Schleusner renders it, "To instruct any one in the first principles of the christian religion." And the word is so used, Matt. xiii. 52; "every scribe *μαθητευθεὶς* instructed in the kingdom of heaven." The constant practice of teaching catechumens, who passed through various classes, and underwent many examinations, before they were received to baptism, manifestly shews that the early christians were exceedingly solicitous that persons should be instructed in the faith, before they were admitted to the ordinances of the gospel.

Irenæus, who wrote towards the close of the second century, about thirty years after Justin, does not mention the baptism of infants: nor do the quotations cited by Dr. Wall from his writings, prove that it was practised in his time. In his work against heresies, written after his election to the bishopric of Lyons in 178, under the pontificate of Eleutherus, he says, "For

Christ came to save all persons by himself; all I mean, who by him are born again to God, infants and little ones, and children and youths, and aged persons." Now admitting the genuineness of this passage, which has been disputed by papists and protestants, it proves nothing in favour of infant baptism: nor can an inference in support of this practice be drawn from it, without allowing, what we presume the independents do not believe, that baptism and regeneration are the same thing.

Had Dr. Wall proceeded in his quotation from Irenæus, he would have destroyed the impression which the above passage was calculated to make upon the minds of his readers in favour of his theory; since what Irenæus says afterwards, proves that he did not refer to the baptism of infants. His words are "for this end he passed through every age (of man) and was made an infant for the sake of infants, sanctifying infants; he was made a little one, for the sake of little ones sanctifying that age; and was at the same time an example to them of the effect of piety, justice, and subjection. He was a youth for the sake of youths, being an example to youths, and sanctifying them to the Lord. And so also he became a senior for the sake of seniors, that he might be a perfect master to all ages, not only by an exposition of the truth, but with regard to their age, sanctify-

ing likewise the aged, and being to them also a pattern : and even until he died, that he might be the first-born from the dead, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence, the prince of life, the first of all, and preceding all.”²

The meaning of this passage appears to be, that Christ came to save all who through grace were born unto God, whether they were young or old ; and that by passing through the several stages of human life, he became an example to them all. This testimony, which Dr. Wall and the independents have thought so conclusive a proof of the existence of infant baptism in the time of Irenæus, Venema has declared to be doubtful and insufficient to prove the fact. In his ecclesiastical history, he says “concerning the custom of the church before the time of Tertullian, nothing can be affirmed with certainty, since no where among the preceding writers, as far as my knowledge extends, does an indubitable statement of pædobaptism appear. Justin Martyr, in his apology, speaking of baptism, mentions that of adults only. Irenæus alone, in his book against heresies, has been supposed to have pointed to it as with a finger, where he says, “that Christ passed through all ages of man, that he might save all by himself, all, I say, who by him are born unto

² Vide Iren. adv. Hær. lib. ii. cap. xxxix. p. 161. Oxon. 1702.

God ; infants, little ones, children, youths, and the aged." The word (*renasci*) to be regenerated, was wont to be used respecting baptism, and that it may be taken in that sense here, I willingly admit ; nevertheless, I do not think it certain, since it is not always used in this sense, particularly when no mention of baptism either precedes or follows it, as is the case here : and in this place, to be regenerated by Christ, may mean to be sanctified or saved by Christ. The sense therefore may be, that in passing through all the various ages of man, Christ designed by his example to shew, that he came for the purpose of saving men of every age, and to sanctify, or save even infants. I conclude therefore that before the time of Tertullian, pædobaptism cannot with certainty be demonstrated to have been practised ; but that in his time there were some who desired to have their infants baptised, especially since through fear of death, they dreaded lest they should die unbaptised ; an opinion which Tertullian opposed, but in a manner which shewed that infant baptism then began to prevail. These circumstances respecting the antiquity of pædobaptism, after the times of the apostles, we may assert with certainty : but we cannot go farther if we would build on a solid foundation".³

³ Vid. Venemæ Hist. Eccles. Christ. Secul. 2. p. 477, Lug. Bat. 1779.

Tertullian is the next author mentioned. He was a native of Africa, a presbyter of the Carthaginian Church, and flourished at the commencement of the third century. He is the first writer who mentions the baptism of babes; and the vague and undecided manner in which he speaks of it, proves that in his day the practice was novel, by no means popular, and far from being general. Dr. Wall, who has made the most of his authority, confesses that "he knows not how to reconcile his statements, and therefore leaves them to his readers to pick out what coherent sense they can." That our readers may judge for themselves, we give Tertullian's words. "What necessity is there to expose godfathers to the hazard of answering for those whom they hold at the font; since they may be prevented by death from being able to perform those promises which they have made for the children, or else may be disappointed by their evil inclinations? Jesus Christ says indeed, hinder not little children from coming to me, but that they should come to him as soon as they are advanced in years, as soon as they have learnt their religion, when they may be taught whither they are going, when they become Christians, when they begin to be able to know Jesus Christ. What is there that shall compel this innocent age to receive baptism? And since they are not yet

allowed the disposal of temporal goods, is it reasonable that they should be entrusted with the concerns of heaven? Let them know how to desire this salvation, that you may appear to have given to him that asketh.”

This passage shews that the baptism of babes was beginning to be used in Tertullian’s day, but we plainly see that he did not advocate the practice, that he condemned it as absurd and pernicious, that he could not trace its authority to apostolic appointment, and that it was not openly recognised as a tradition of the Christian church.

What this father says in another place, clearly proves that he considered infants unfit for baptism; and that administering it to them, was in his opinion, a departure from the original, as well as the general custom of the church. “Baptism is the seal of faith; which faith is begun and evidenced by the faith of repentance; we are not therefore washed that we may cease to sin, but because we have ceased to do it, and are already purified in the heart.”⁴

Here he plainly declares, that those who then were members of the church, were not baptised till they professed to be the subjects of faith, repentance, and inward holiness. Should it be replied that Tertullian was a con-

⁴ Vide de Pœnitentia, Cap. vi. p. 125.

vert from heathenism, and therefore was not baptised till he had given evidence of faith and repentance ; we answer, if it were so, would he have spoken in this manner of his brethren, if they had been baptised in their infancy? And in that case is it likely that he would have opposed infant baptism at all? The way in which he speaks of this ceremony, shews that in his esteem, it was an innovation ; of this our opponents seem conscious, when they endeavour to lessen his authority, by impugning his character. We are as little disposed as they can be, to adopt the opinions of any of the early fathers on points of doctrine ; for we believe that in many instances they have darkened counsel by words without knowledge : but as narrators of historical facts, their testimony is of importance. From them, and from Tertullian in particular, we discover, that at the close of the second century, when the practice of infant baptism began to appear, the church of Christ had lost much of its primitive simplicity, and congregational independence ; that the seeds of episcopacy long secretly sown were ripening into popery, which in succeeding ages, has, like the deadly upas, been spreading its deleterious shade over the vineyard of the Lord.

We now come to Origen, another African presbyter, who lived about the year 230. His testimony in favour of pædobaptism has been

deemed explicit, and we should allow the assumption, could it be proved that the works from which it is taken were his genuine productions: but on this point there are many strong and reasonable doubts. The evidence which the independents, upon the authority of Dr. Wall, have urged as decisive, is collected from the Latin translations of Ruffinus and Hierom, which are so interpolated, that most learned men have disputed their authenticity. Dupin says "We have hardly any of the homilies (of Origen) in Greek, and those which we have in Latin are translated by Ruffinus and others, with so much liberty, that it is a difficult matter to discern what is Origen's own from what has been foisted in by the interpreter." In his notes he observes, "and besides, this appears by the translation itself, which is full of figures, and allusions to Latin words, and terms, taken in another sense than what they were in Origen's time, where the Trinity, and other mysteries, are expressed in such terms as were not used till after the council of Nice; and where there are points of discipline more modern than Origen's age; which has given occasion to those who have not considered the liberty that Ruffinus took of adding or leaving out what he pleased, to doubt whether the greatest part of these works were Origen's or no. The liberty which Ruffinus has given himself is still more evident

by what he has written in the prologue to his version of the commentary upon the epistle to the Romans, which he says he has abridged by above the half. Hierom's versions are not more exact." ⁵ Erasmus, Grotius, Huetius and others who were well acquainted with the writings of Origen, have condemned these Latin versions as full of interpolations; and even Dr. Wall himself, who has shewn more candour than any of the later defenders of pædobaptism, confesses that "all the world have blamed the method of Ruffinus, for it is fit for a translator to give a true account of what his author says, be it good or bad; whereas now in these translations of Ruffinus, the reader is uncertain whether he read Origen or Ruffinus." Does not this concession invalidate the whole mass of evidence which the Dr. has selected from these corrupt translations? And since nothing can be collected from the genuine Greek works of Origen, in favour of infant baptism, are we not justified in concluding, that those passages attributed to him, are the interpolations of Ruffinus, a popish monk, who lived at the close of the fourth century, and who wished to make it appear upon the testimony of Origen, that infant baptism was a custom of the church grounded upon Apostolic authority. That neither Cyprian nor

⁵ See Eccles. Hist. Vol. i. p. 100.

Augustine, both strenuous advocates for infant baptism, refer to this supposed testimony of Origen, is another reason why we reject it as spurious.

We shall now notice the testimony of Cyprian, bishop of Carthage. This African father, who lived in the middle of the third century, was the earliest writer who expressly pleaded for the baptism of infants, and consistently with this sentiment, he admitted them to the Lord's supper. If then his opinion be of any weight in the one case, it ought to be of equal weight in the other; and those who refer to his authority for the baptism of their babes, should recollect that the custom of administering to infants the Lord's supper, originated in the same age, and was practised and defended by the same parties.

From the days of Tertullian it is evident that pædobaptism gained ground in Africa, where, according to general opinion, most of the early innovations took their rise; and the circumstance, that the African writers of the third century, are the first who mention the baptism of infants, is in strict conformity with this sentiment.

The universal practice of this rite among the African churches originated in the celebrated council assembled at Carthage, by Cyprian, A. D. 253, when he, at the head of 66 bishops, enacted a law for its regular observance. This

transaction has a very suspicious aspect ; especially as it stands in immediate relation to the first historical documents on the subject of infant baptism—if it were indeed a divinely instituted ordinance, uninterruptedly transmitted from the Apostles, what need for the enactments of a council to regulate its administration ?

The attempt of a late writer, to cast a veil over the broad episcopal features of this Carthaginian synod, by designating it “*a council consisting of sixty six ministers,*”⁶ is futile in the extreme, and betrays, either a want of candour or of information. It was to all intents and purposes, an *assembly of ecclesiastical legislators*, convened by Cyprian, the great Apostle of the high church party in his day, to *pass an act of uniformity*. To represent the persons who composed this council, as *ministers*, a term denoting among dissenters a perfect equality in office, is to insinuate what is not true respecting them ; for they were neither in the nature, nor in the exercise of their office, equal and independent. Dr. Campbell very justly remarks, “was it ever observed of writers in the fourth and fifth centuries, to come no lower, that they in this manner confounded the different ecclesiastical offices of the third ? Is Cyprian for instance, in any succeeding age, styled a presbyter of Carthage,

⁶ See Henry Burder’s sermon on the right of infants to baptism.

or Rogation the bishop? Are not their respective titles as uniformly observed in after ages, as in their own?"⁷ The same learned writer observes in another place, "thus we have advanced from the perfect equality, in respect of ministerial powers, in the stated pastors of the churches planted by the Apostles, to that parochial episcopacy, which immediately succeeded it; and which, though it arose gradually from an inconsiderable cause, seems to have assumed the model of a proper episcopate, as the word is now understood, before the middle of the second century. And this I consider as the first step of the hierarchy."⁸

The ecclesiastical records of the third century, the time when infant baptism was first mentioned, serve to prove, that the great apostasy predicted by the Apostle in his epistle to the Thessalonians, was even at this early period assuming a decided and portentous aspect. That system of spiritual despotism which has been denominated the hierarchy, and which for so many ages, has imposed upon the consciences of the people the most erroneous doctrines, and the most degrading ceremonies, arose from small and apparently trivial innovations upon the primitive constitution of the church of Christ. Among the first christian societies a perfect

⁷ Lect. on Eccles. Hist. Vol. I. p. 192. ⁸ Vol. I. p. 242.

equality and distinct independency prevailed : they chose their own officers, and directed their own affairs, according to the rules prescribed in the New Testament. This state of things appears to have been but of short continuance ; for soon after the death of the Apostles, the churches which they had planted, and entrusted with their writings, were considered as possessing superior authority ; they were consulted on matters of importance, and were frequently constituted arbitrators on subjects of religious controversy. This appeal to the opinion of the apostolic churches, though at first voluntary, formed a precedent on which those churches afterwards claimed an exclusive right to discuss and to decide all questions of difficulty.

As one innovation prepares the way for another, so this preeminence of certain churches was followed by an assumption of power on the part of their ministers ; who, looking upon themselves as the legitimate successors of the Apostles, exercised an authority, as hostile to the interests of true religion, as it was to the liberties of the people. Hence the origin of those various ecclesiastical orders, diocesans, metropolitans, pontiffs, &c. introduced with a train of pompous ceremonies, foreign from the nature and design of the gospel. The numerous councils held in the third century, materially

tended to exalt these ecclesiastical dignities, and to stamp them with the broad seal of public approbation. These assemblies were composed of bishops and presbyters, who, though the representatives of distinct communities, yet by their voice in council, passed decrees, which gradually abridged the liberty of the people, and at length brought them under the bondage of an episcopal usurpation.

It is acknowledged by all parties that many innovations had crept into the christian worship previous to this period. Mosheim when speaking of the internal history of the church during the *second century*, says “these councils of which we find not the smallest trace before the middle of this century, changed the whole face of the church, and gave it a new form ; for by them the ancient privileges of the people were considerably diminished, and the power and authority of the bishops greatly augmented. The humility indeed and prudence of these pious prelates prevented their assuming all at once the power with which they were afterwards invested. At their first appearance in these general councils, they acknowledged that they were no more than the delegates of their respective churches, and that they acted in the name and by the appointment of their people. But they soon changed this humble tone, imperceptibly extended the limits of their authority, turned their

influence into dominion, and their councils into laws, and openly asserted at length that Christ had empowered them to prescribe to his people authoritative rules of faith and manners. Another effect of these councils was, the gradual abolition of that perfect equality which reigned among all bishops in primitive times. For the order and decency of these assemblies required that some one of the provincial bishops, met in council, should be invested with a superior degree of power and authority, and hence the rights of Metropolitans derive their origin." Pursuing the same subject in another place, he observes, "the christian doctors had the good fortune to persuade the people that the ministers of the christian church succeeded to the character, rights, and privileges of the Jewish priesthood; and this persuasion was a new source both of honor and profit to the sacred order. And accordingly the bishops considered themselves as invested with a rank and character similar to those of the high priests among the Jews, while the presbyters represented the priests, and the deacons the levites. It is indeed highly probable that they who first introduced this absurd comparison of offices, so entirely distinct, did it rather through ignorance and error, than through artifice or design. The notion, however, once introduced, produced its natural effects, and those effects were pernicious.

The errors to which it gave rise were many and one of its immediate consequences was, the establishment of a greater difference between the christian pastors and their flocks, than the genius of the gospel seems to admit.”⁹

This early assumption of the character and rights of the Jewish priesthood, by the minister of the christian church, is clearly asserted by Dr. Campbell, who says, “It was the same spirit (referring to the spirit of innovation) that prompted in the pastors, the affectation of epithets added to their names, expressive of their virtues, and of the esteem and veneration of those that approached them; such as most holy, most blessed, most religious, most worthy of God, beloved of God, reverend, venerable, and many others, which it were tedious to enumerate—together with certain ceremonies, such as bowing the head, kissing the hand, and the like. At no time could the pharisaical scribes be accused of greater ostentation, or more desire of greetings in the markets, and to be called of men Rabbi; Rabbi, than were a few ages afterwards the ministers of the humble Jesus, who had so expressly warned his followers against the imitation of their vain-glorious manner.” *See Sect. 10.*

All the authentic ecclesiastical remains of the

⁹ Eccles. Hist. Vol. i. p. 178.

first ages support the testimony of these writers; and prove, not only the reality, but the early rise, and vast extent of this episcopal usurpation. The influence of that spirit of innovation, which led the ministers of Christ to assume the dignities of the levitical priesthood, gradually spread through the whole church, till the nature and design of the gospel were concealed; and numerous ceremonies were introduced, which increased the power of the bishops, and gave to the christian religion the pompous splendour of the Jewish worship. Lest these things should be opposed as unauthorised by the New Testament, they were defended under the imposing title of *Apostolic traditions*—that is, unwritten authoritative rules of faith and practice, delivered by the apostles to the first ministers, and handed down by them to their immediate successors. There was a twofold purpose answered by this title—while it emboldened the advocates of the hierarchy to prescribe what rites they pleased, it insured the adoption of those rites by the church, because they were delivered to them under the high sanction of apostolic authority.

Can any consistent dissenter imagine, that the great founder of christianity, who condemned the effects of tradition on the minds of the Jews in turning them from the commandments of God, would himself authorise this method of

instruction under the gospel dispensation; and thus prepare the way for the subversion of his own system? The nature and consequences of traditionary instruction, are arguments against its having originated with any inspired instructor. When we recollect the variety of opinions which men hold on the same subject, the liability of the best of men to misconceive the plainest truths, and the propensity in all men to propagate truth in the form under which they embrace it; is it not manifest that this scheme of regulating the faith and practice of the church, must inevitably tend to corrupt its doctrines and to change its worship? If then tradition, in the hands of men of upright minds and honest intentions, be productive of evil, what might it not effect when used as a tool by crafty and ambitious teachers? Besides which, the mere alteration, or omission of a single word might change the whole design of a traditionary law, and lay the foundation of a most dangerous error.

As the independents have appealed of late to apostolic tradition in support of their theory, we shall examine what claims it has to be considered an authentic rule to the church of Christ.

During the second century, a variety of doctrines and ceremonies were introduced into the christian worship, by certain of the fathers, who claimed a personal acquaintance with the

Apostles, or with those who had been their intimate associates. These opinions and practices, coming recommended by persons thus honoured, had considerable weight; and resting upon their verbal testimony, were received as *simple tradition*. In process of time, when it had become uncertain with whom these things originated, or when their general adoption rendered an appeal to personal testimony needless, they passed under the name of *ancient*, and *secret tradition*: but it was not until the close of the third, and the beginning of the fourth centuries that they received the imposing title of *apostolic tradition*.

Tertullian mentions tradition, as the authority upon which many rites were performed in his day. "Now to begin with baptism. When we come to the water, we do there (and we do the same a little before in the whole congregation) under the hand of the pastor make a profession, that we renounce the devil, and his pomps, and his angels. Then we are plunged three times in the water; and we answer some few words more than those which our Saviour in the gospel has enjoined. When we are taken out of the water, we taste a mixture of milk and honey, and from that time we abstain a whole week from bathing ourselves, which otherwise we use every day. The sacrament of the eucharist, which our Lord celebrated at meal time,

and ordered all to take, we receive in our assemblies before day: and never but from the hands of the pastor. We give oblations every year for the dead, on the day of their martyrdom. We account it an unfit thing to keep any fasts on the Lord's day, or to kneel at our prayers on that day. The same liberty we take all the time from Easter to Pentecost. We are troubled at it, if any of our bread or wine fall to the ground. At every setting out or entry on business, whenever we come in, or go out from any place; when we dress for a journey, when we go into a bath; when we go to meat, when the candles are brought in; when we lie down, or sit down; and whatever business we have, we make on our foreheads the sign of the cross. If you search in the scriptures for any command for these, and such like usages, *you shall find none.* Tradition will be urged to you as the ground of them; *custom* as the confirmer of them; and our religion teaches to observe them."¹

This quotation affords an affecting proof of the fatal influence of tradition; and the farther we pursue the subject, the more shall we be convinced that it was not the design of Christ that any part of his worship should be regulated by rules derived from oral testimony. To expose

¹ See Wall's History of Infant Baptism, part ii. c. 9.

the folly of adopting any practice recommended by such authority, we need only take a view of some of the customs to which it gave rise.

The sign of the cross in baptism, observed at the present day by the principal ecclesiastical establishments, was in general use in the days of Tertullian and Cyprian. The former says, "The flesh is washed, that the soul may be unspotted; the flesh is anointed, that the soul may be consecrated; the flesh is signed, that the soul may be fortified." And the latter declares that "they only can be saved who are regenerated, and signed with the sign of Christ." All this Basil and Austin defended, in the fourth century, on the authority of *apostolic tradition*.

The consecration of baptismal water, as still practised in the Greek and Roman churches, was an early ceremony. Tertullian mentions it, and Cyprian says "the water must first be cleansed and sanctified by the priest, that it may, by his baptising in it, wash away the sins of the man that is baptised." In the following age this consecration was considered an *apostolic tradition*.

The anointing of the baptised with oil is thus noticed by Tertullian; "When we come out of the laver, we are anointed with a blessed ointment, according to the ancient practice, by which men used to be anointed for the priest's

office with oil out of a horn." Cyprian says "The baptised person must also be anointed, that by having the chrism, or anointing oil, he may be the anointed of God." This ceremony was confirmed by the council of Laodicea, which decreed in their forty-eighth canon, that "baptised persons must after their baptism receive the holy anointing." Basil, Austin, and Ambrose plead for it as the universal custom of the church, received by *apostolic tradition*.

Imposition of hands, renunciations, and exorcisms, were all considered essential parts of baptism by the ancients, and were observed with great exactness. Tertullian remarks "when we enter into the water we profess the faith of Christ in the words of his law; we protest with our mouth that we renounce the devil, and his pomps and his angels." Origen, about 30 years after says "let every one of the faithful remember when he first came to the waters of baptism, when he received the first seals of faith, and came to the fountain of salvation, what words he then used, and what he denounced to the devil; that he would not use his pomps, nor his works, nor any of his service, nor obey his precepts." And after infant baptism had crept into the church, the same ceremonies accompanied it, as appears from Tertullian's objection to it, and from what Austin asserts, "that infants do profess repentance by the words of

those that bring them, when they do by them renounce the devil and his works." These things were practised and defended on the ground of *apostolic tradition*.

Immersing the baptised three times, and giving them a mixture of milk and honey when they came out of the water, were customs of early origin. In addition to these, there were prayers for the dead, oblations to the martyrs, bowing to the east, the superstitious observance of times and seasons, as Easter, Whitsuntide, &c. All these were defended by Cyprian, Jerom, and Austin, as ancient and universal rites of the church, founded upon *apostolic tradition*.

It is among these customs, let it be remembered, that we first meet with *infant baptism*, and its appropriate appendage infant communion. We cannot but think that the time when this practice began, the ceremonies which accompanied it, the principle upon which it was performed, and the authority by which it was supported, prove it to be an episcopal innovation. The first pædobaptists did not appeal to the scriptures for their authority, nor have they given us the oral testimony of any of the apostles; their refuge is a secret and undefined tradition. How unaccountable is this circumstance in relation to a ceremony of such supposed importance! Has it any parallel in the history of scripture ordinances? Did any institution come

from God, and the church not know how, or by whom it came? If any of the apostles had enjoined the baptism of babes, certainly some of the primitive fathers would have known which of them, and would have recorded the particulars of the fact: but no such fact is recorded—and strange to say, this mighty Babel of popular superstition can boast no higher authority than the most degrading rites that disgrace the annals of popery. Like them it is derived from tradition, and like them must sink into oblivion, when tradition shall give place to the written testimony of God!

It may perhaps be contended, that the authority of tradition is still good, though many practices ascribed to it, are confessedly erroneous; and that the abuse of any principle is no argument against the principle itself: but if it can be proved, that apostolic tradition was not sufficient to direct the church even in the second century, we cannot consider it competent authority in the nineteenth; and to do this, we need only refer to the controversy between the eastern and western churches, respecting the time of keeping Easter. The Asiatic churches celebrated that festival on the fourteenth day of the moon of March, on whatever day of the week it happened, while the western churches observed it on the Sunday following the full moon. Both parties pleaded the custom of their

predecessors, and the authority of apostolic tradition. The bishops of the Asiatic churches said they derived their tradition from John and Philip. The bishop of Rome and his adherents, professed to have received theirs from Paul and Peter. This dispute, in which fathers were opposed to fathers, and tradition to tradition, began at a very early period, even while some were living who had seen the Apostles. If it was so difficult *at that time* to decide the peculiar circumstances of a public festival, how shall we in this age, select from the great mass of traditionary laws any one, and invest it with apostolic authority! Who will undertake to assure us, which is the genuine apostolic enactment, episcopacy or pædobaptism? The Independents reject the former, and retain the latter, but by what rule do they thus decide, for if tradition be an infallible directory it ought to be obeyed in all things—if it be not infallible, its authority should be excluded from the church of Christ. The question then is—do the Independents believe the infallibility of this tradition by which they defend infant baptism? If they do, let them act according to their belief, and where are they?—within the pale of the Romish church. If they do not believe it, of what value is its authority in support of their practice, and what becomes of pædobaptism?

When there is strong evidence against the

truth of a principle, it is extremely hazardous to make that principle a guide in divine worship; especially when God has given us a written testimony, so definite and perspicuous. To leave this unerring rule, for that tradition which has been the refuge of early innovators and modern papists, is to follow the example of Esau, who sold his birth-right for a mess of pottage.

We shall proceed to examine the principles upon which this theory has been defended. The practice of baptising infants arose out of a belief that baptism was absolutely necessary to salvation; and upon this principle it was strenuously defended by all the early pædobaptists: they ascribed to the baptismal water the power of illuminating, sanctifying, and regenerating the soul, and thus they led the people to conclude, that unless they and their children were baptised, they could not be saved. Justin says "baptism can cleanse, and purify only a penitent;"² he also calls it 'the water of life.'³ Irenæus says, "Christ gave to his disciples the power of regenerating to God, when he sent them to baptise."⁴ Clemens Alexandrinus declares that "being immersed, we are illuminated; being illuminated, we are adopted as sons; being adopted, we are made perfect; being made perfect, we are rendered immortal."⁵ And in

² *Contra Tryph.* p. 231. ³ *Idem* p. 261. ⁴ *Adv. Hæres.* iii. 17.

⁵ *Pædag.* c. i. 6.

another place, “ thus we who are baptised, having our sins cleansed, which in some measure darkened the divine spirit, are free and delivered from every impediment, and have the clear vision of the Spirit, by which alone we see what is divine, the Holy Spirit from heaven being poured into us.” Tertullian held the same opinion; he says, “neither do I deny that a divine benefit (that is the blotting out of sins) is sure, to those that are about to enter the water:”⁶ again, “ for all waters, by an ancient prerogative, become a sacrament of sanctification through prayer; for the spirit immediately comes from heaven and rests upon the waters, sanctifying them by himself; and so being sanctified, they imbibe the power of sanctifying.”⁷ And again, “ whereas it is ordained, that no one can be saved without baptism, by that weighty declaration of our Lord, who says, except a man shall be born of water he has no life.”⁸

This opinion, respecting the necessity of baptism, originated probably in a misconception of our Lord’s words, “ except a man be born of water, and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” The early fathers evidently considered, that to be born of water, referred to baptism; and that the kingdom of God, meant a state of future happiness; and

⁶ De pœnit. c. 6. ⁷ De Baptismo. ⁸ Idem.

hence they concluded that no man could be saved unless he was baptised—an inference which is correct, if the premises are admitted : but though it is highly probable that our Lord did refer to baptism, under the expression ‘born of water’, yet I think it very unlikely that he used the phrase ‘kingdom of God’, in relation to eternal life ; for such an explication of the words would render the work of the spirit nugatory, and make our salvation depend upon an external ceremony. That the phrase ‘kingdom of God’ does in some places refer to a state of future glory, I readily grant ; but in a general way, it applies to that spiritual constitution of things, which was then about to be established in the world, under the government of Christ, called in the language of prophecy, “a kingdom which God should set up.” It is in allusion to the reign of grace, or our Lord’s spiritual dominion upon earth, that the terms are used in the following passages—“Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God.”⁹—“Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God?”¹—“And he said unto them, verily I say unto you, that there be some of them that stand here, who shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.”: See also

⁹ See Mark, i. 14. 15. ¹ See Mark, iv. 30. ² See Mark, ix. 1.
Also Luke, xvii. 20, 21 ; and Matt. xvi. 43.

the 13th chapter of Matthew, which is full of parabolical allusions to the gospel dispensation, under the title of the kingdom of God.

These passages prove that the phrase frequently relates to Christ's spiritual dominion in this world. May not our Lord's words then, "except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," be designed to shew, that no man can be a consistent subject of his kingdom, who is not both regenerated and baptised; the former being necessary to salvation, the latter to that profession of faith which he requires of all, before they are admitted to the privileges of the gospel church. The expression, "except a man be born of water and of the spirit," is very similar in its construction to that in Matthew iii. 11, "He shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost and fire." The fire is the visible representation of the spirit; and may not the water be considered as the outward symbol of regeneration?

The doctrine of baptismal regeneration was generally believed by the fathers of the second century; and upon this principle the first pædobaptists introduced and defended their practice. Hear what Cyprian says in his epistle to Donatus. He declares that "previous to his conversion, it appeared impossible to him, that a man should instantly put off sin in the laver of salutary water; but he could testify that he

had experienced it, saying, by the help of the regenerating water, the pollution of the former life is washed away, a serene and purer light from above flows into the purified heart ; afterwards, a second birth ; the spirit being derived from heaven made me a new man." In his 71st epistle to Quintus, he says, "there is one water in the holy church which makes men (Christ's) sheep." In his 73rd epistle to Jubainas, he says, "hence (from the time of baptism) begins the origin of all faith, an introduction to the hope of eternal life, and a divine authority for purifying and quickening the servants of God." Gregory Nazianzen declares,³ that "they who die unbaptised, without their own fault, go neither to heaven, nor hell ; but, if they have lived piously, to a middle place."⁴

Chrysostom says "it is impossible to be saved without baptism ; and if an infant die without baptism, through the negligence of the presbyter, woe to that presbyter ! But if, through the negligence of the parents, woe to the parents of that infant !" Again in another place,⁵ "if sudden death seize us, which God forbid, before we are baptised ; though we have a thousand good qualities, there is nothing to be expected but hell." Austin, throughout his writings, defends infant baptism on the ground of its

³ Orat. xl. p. 653. ⁴ Vid. Venemæ Hist. Eccles. tom. 3. p. 485. 661.

⁵ Hom. xxiv. in Jeann.

necessity. He says "let us not therefore of our own head promise any eternal salvation to infants without the baptism of Christ." "It may well be said that infants departing this life without baptism, will be under the mildest condemnation of all; but he that affirms, that they will not be under condemnation, does much deceive us, and is deceived himself."⁶ "The Christians of Africa do well call baptism itself one's salvation; and the sacrament of Christ's body, one's life. From whence is this, but as I suppose from ancient apostolical tradition, by which the church of Christ do naturally hold that without baptism, and partaking of the Lord's table, none can either come to the kingdom of God, or to salvation and eternal life." Austin then refers to the celebrated passages, Tit. iii. 5, 1. Pet. iii. 21, and John vi. 53 to 57, and concludes by remarking, "If then, so many divine testimonies do agree, that neither salvation, nor eternal life is to be hoped for by any, without baptism, and the body and blood of our Lord, it is in vain promised to infants without them!"⁷ In another place he says, "the whole christian church has constantly held, that infants are baptised for forgiveness of sins; and that he never *read nor heard of any christian, catholic, or sectary, that held otherwise, or denied it to be necessary.*"

⁶ Wall's Hist. Inf. Bap. pt. 2, c. 6. ⁷ Idem. pt. 2, c. 9.

Such then is the avowed principle upon which infant baptism was originally practised, and long defended! When did any baptist, in the warmth of his zeal, for what has been styled his “darling hypothesis,” utter such language? With what consistency can modern pædobaptists charge us with “making a mere ritual ceremony of greater importance than moral virtues,” when their predecessors regarded it as the fountain of grace and salvation? Why do the independents of the present day adopt the practice, while they renounce the principle of the early pædobaptists? If they should reply, that they have discovered this principle to be erroneous, and therefore they discard it; we would ask them to consider how far that practice can be worth retaining, which was introduced, and defended for so long a period, upon a principle so manifestly absurd and unscriptural?

While the ancients pleaded for pædobaptism on the ground of its necessity, the more modern advocates of this theory defend it by arguments deduced from the Abrahamic covenant, and the rite of circumcision.

Though we deny that the abrogated rites of the old covenant, are either a law, or a precedent to the church under the gospel dispensation, yet as our opponents affirm the contrary, and defend their practice upon this principle, we will examine the evidence produced in its support.

The propositions they endeavour to establish are

First, That the covenant which God made with Abraham and his seed, was the covenant of grace, the same in its nature as that under which we live.

Second, That circumcision was the sign and seal of this covenant of grace, confirming all its blessings to Abraham, and to all his posterity.

Third, That circumcision is superseded by baptism, which is in the present dispensation, what circumcision was in the former, the sign and seal of spiritual blessings.

As mistakes frequently arise from a misapplication of terms, or from a misconception of the sense in which those terms are used, it may not be amiss to ascertain, first, what is meant by the covenant of grace. A covenant was a voluntary agreement between two or more persons, generally ratified by an offering, of which the contracting parties partook before they separated, in token of mutual concurrence. Such were the covenants between Isaac and Abimelech,⁸ and between Jacob and Laban.⁹ In this view the word is used in reference to those solemn engagements between God and his people, which were confirmed by sacrifices; hence they are said to have “made a covenant

⁸ Gen. xxvi. 28, 31. ⁹ Gen. xxxi. 44, 50.

with him by sacrifice.”¹ The most important of these federal transactions, were the covenants with Noah, Abraham, and the children of Israel at Sinai; all of which were ratified by the shedding of blood. These are never called *covenants of grace*, but *covenants of promise*.²

The *covenant of grace*, as it is called, refers to the eternal counsel between the Father and Son, respecting the salvation of those who were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. This transaction is called by the apostle, “the purpose of God according to election,”³ “the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus,”⁴ and is I think referred to in the 89th Psalm, as the covenant which Jehovah had made with his chosen, and which should stand fast with him for ever. This covenant of grace was between the Father and the Son, not between God and Abraham. God indeed revealed it to men in the various covenants which he had made with them; but we must be careful to distinguish between the covenants which God makes with men, concerning the coming of Christ, and that everlasting covenant which he made with Christ, concerning the salvation of the elect.

The revelation of this purpose of mercy, or covenant of grace, has formed a primary and

¹ Psalm, l. 6. ² Eph. ii. 12. Gal. iii. 16, 19. ³ Rom. ix. 11.

⁴ Eph. iii. 11.

important feature in all the great transactions, which have taken place between God and man, in every age of the world. It was first made known to Adam, in that obscure but merciful promise, “the seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent,”⁵ and was very probably accompanied with a sacrifice as its irrevocable seal. It was then renewed to Noah, and his sons: “and God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, and I, behold, I establish *my covenant* with you, and with your seed after you.”⁶ The sacrifice that Noah offered to God on this occasion, was not merely an expression of his gratitude for past deliverance, but of his faith in the first promise; and was designed to typify the true sacrifice of Christ, which had been prefigured in the earliest sacrificial institutions. The renewal of this covenant with Noah, was accompanied with an additional revelation; for the Lord assured him that the first promise should be accomplished in the seed of his first-born. “I will enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem.”⁷

In process of time, this covenant of grace was more distinctly revealed to Abraham, and was confirmed by a federal engagement between God and him. This engagement constitutes what is called the *Abrahamic covenant*, the

⁵ Gen. iii. 15. ⁶ Gen. ix. 8, 9. ⁷ See the 27th verse.

nature of which is distinctly pointed out in its history. The first communication made to Abraham, was in the land of Haran, when the Lord commanded him to leave his father's house, saying, "I will bless thee, and thou shalt be a blessing, and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed."⁸ No sooner had Abraham obeyed this injunction, and entered the land of Canaan, than God said unto him, "unto thy seed will I give this land.", Eight years afterwards God appeared unto him again, and promised that "he should have a son, who should be his heir, that his seed should be more in number than the stars of heaven, and that they should have the land of Canaan for an inheritance." These promises were ratified by sacrifice; for "in the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abraham."¹

Sixteen years after this transaction, the covenant of circumcision was made,—“And when Abraham was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared unto him and said, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant,

⁸ Gen. xii. 2, 3. ⁹ Gen. xii. 7. ¹ Gen. xv. 4-19.

to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God. And God said unto Abraham, thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou and thy seed after thee in their generation. This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you, and thy seed after thee; every man-child among you shall be circumcised, and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised man-child, that soul shall be cut off from his people: he hath broken my covenant.”²

Here are three distinct transactions recorded, which took place at three different periods. The first was a revelation of God’s purpose of grace to Abraham, and to all the nations of the earth through him. “I will bless thee, and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” This was *not* a covenant entered into with Abraham, but a renewal of the promise made to our first parents, in more clear and decisive language: in this promise Abraham believed, and by his

² Gen. xvii.

faith he was justified. So the apostle speaks—“even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness: and the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham; saying, in thee shall all nations be blessed. Now to Abraham and his seed, were the promises made. He saith not unto seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ.”³ Thus the apostle informs us, that the first promise made to Abraham, was the *gospel*, or *covenant of grace*, preached to him: in which he, and all who believe, whether Jews or Gentiles, have an everlasting interest.

In order to fulfil this promise, now so clearly revealed, it was necessary that Abraham should have a seed according to the flesh, from whom the Messiah should spring; and also that the posterity of this seed should be kept distinct and separate, till the object of the promise should appear. In perfect harmony with these designs, observe the second communication from God to Abraham—“he that cometh forth out of thine own bowels, shall be thine heir. Look now toward heaven and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them; and he said unto him, so shall thy seed be.”⁴ The first promise, “in

³ Gal. iii. 6, 8, 16. ⁴ Gen. xv. 4, 5.

thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed," was spiritual and eternal, referring to the salvation of the elect: this second promise, "he that cometh forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir," was earthly and temporal, applying to the descendants of Abraham, according to the flesh; through whom, as instruments, the first was to be accomplished. Thus these two promises pointed to two objects very distinct from each other, yet, in the economy of the divine government, intimately and necessarily connected, as means and end:—Abraham and his natural seed, Christ and his spiritual seed. These two promises, the one spiritual, the other temporal, laid the foundation of those distinct relations which were peculiar to the Jewish dispensation. Jehovah sustained a two-fold relation to the Jews—spiritual and political; the first included those only, who were chosen to eternal life; the second pertained to the whole nation, and ceased when the purpose in which it originated was fulfilled. Abraham likewise held a two-fold relation: for while he was the spiritual head and representative of those who, like himself, believed in the first promise, he was the father of all the Jews according to the flesh. The Jews too, as a people, sustained a two-fold character, for while some of them were the spiritual seed of Abraham, and children of God by faith in him who was to come,

they were all the natural descendants of Abraham, and they all had a political relation to the God of Abraham.

There are certainly no such natural and political relations under the gospel dispensation.

These two promises, which constituted Abraham the father of two distinct seeds in one visible political body, led to the third transaction between God and him, recorded in Gen. xvii. "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generations. This is my covenant which ye shall keep between me and thee, and thy seed after thee; every male child among you shall be circumcised." This is the true Abrahamic covenant, and that it is *not* the pure covenant of grace, as affirmed by the independents, is evident from an appeal to the facts of the case. In this federal transaction, there were certain stipulated conditions, the faithful observance of which constituted the very bond of the covenant. Abraham was to circumcise every male born in his house, or bought with his money: he was to walk before God, and to be perfect—while God engaged, on his part, to "be a God to Abraham, and to his seed after him." If this reciprocal engagement was the covenant of redemption, then salvation to the Jews was made to depend upon obedience to a positive command.

Again, this covenant with Abraham related to the temporal, or second promise ;—“ thou shalt be a father of many nations—I will make thee exceeding fruitful—I will make nations of thee—kings shall come out of thee—I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan.” Here is no mention of the first promise, “ in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed ;” but a particular enumeration of events which received a literal accomplishment.

Again, this covenant included the *whole posterity* of Abraham ;—can this be said of the covenant of grace ? The scriptures declare that “ they are not all Israel, which are of Israel ; neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children.” The covenant of circumcision, in direct opposition to this declaration, did belong to all Abraham’s children according to the flesh ; and they who were not partakers of his faith, were nevertheless partakers of the promise.

Again, the sentence pronounced against the transgressor, proves that this was not the covenant of grace, “ the soul that is not circumcised shall be cut off from his people ; he hath broken my covenant.” This is not the spirit and language of the gospel, but of the law. Nor can the principles, here laid down, be

admitted as applicable to the covenant of grace, without maintaining sentiments subversive of the truth. The Abrahamic covenant was liable to be broken; it was frequently broken by the Jews;⁵ and its promised blessings belonged to all who were circumcised, irrespective of their faith. Are these the principles of the present dispensation? Can the gospel covenant be broken? Does the possession of its blessings depend upon baptism? Is the neglect of its ritual ceremonies threatened with capital punishment? If not, then was there a material difference between the Abrahamic covenant and the covenant of grace!

Secondly, The independents maintain that circumcision was the sign and seal of the covenant of grace, confirming all its blessings to Abraham, and to all his posterity.

Here we remark, that circumcision is never called a seal of the covenant of grace, by any inspired writer—yet, as our opponents affirm that it was such, we ask them, what spiritual blessings did it seal? Was it the pledge of adoption, pardon, justification, and redemption to the Jews? Were they circumcised because they had been chosen to eternal life, or, were they chosen to eternal life because they were circumcised? certainly, if circumcision was a

⁵ Ezek. xliv. 7.

seal of grace, then grace must either have preceded, or succeeded this ceremony.

When the independents assert that circumcision was the seal of the covenant of grace, do they really believe, that this rite was an infallible token of personal interest in spiritual blessings, to *every one who received it*? If they do, it follows of course, that they believe grace to have been universal, and redemption general, to all Abraham's seed; and how is it, that they maintain grace to be sovereign in its display, and redemption particular in its application, under the present dispensation, since in their opinion, the Abrahamic covenant and the covenant of grace are one and the same thing?

If they do not believe, that circumcision was an infallible token of grace to all who received it, we are utterly at a loss to imagine what they mean, by sealing with the seal of grace—and they themselves must confess, that for a man to receive this seal, and yet not possess the grace so sealed, would be a fearful anomaly in the divine conduct!

Moreover, they must know, that God commanded many to be circumcised, who did not enjoy the blessings promised to Abraham; upon their own ground then, circumcision was not in many instances a seal of the covenant of grace, unless it be supposed that God gave the pledge, where he withheld the blessing. Let them tell

us, what benefit either spiritual or temporal, was secured to Ishmael, Esau, and the sons of Abraham by Keturah. If the Abrahamic covenant was the covenant of grace, circumcision should not have been administered to Ishmael, as a token of his interest in it, since he was positively excluded. Neither could it have been a token to him, or his posterity, of temporal possessions in the land of Canaan, because they never realised an interest in that inheritance. The same may be said of Esau, and of the children of Keturah, and of many of the Israelites—they who came out of Egypt were all circumcised, but not as a seal of grace, for many of them perished in the wilderness, through unbelief; and for more than four hundred years after this rite was instituted, not one of Abraham's descendants, inherited the promised land: nor was the land of Canaan conveyed to the Jews by circumcision, but by a promise made to Abraham, more than twenty years before he was circumcised.

Circumcision has both a literal and a spiritual signification, as had all the typical ordinances of the legal dispensation. It was a permanent sign, or standing memorial of two important facts—first, of God's promise to Abraham, to multiply his seed, and to give unto them the land of Canaan, for a perpetual inheritance. "I will make thee exceeding fruitful; and ye shall

circumcise the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you." Hence circumcision was to be an indelible mark in the flesh of all the Jews, proving their descent from Abraham, and the faithfulness of God, in the fulfilment of this promise; and it served to keep them a distinct people till the Messiah came. No aliens could obtrude into their community without being discovered; neither could *they* mix with other nations without being known. In all their revolutions they continued a separate people; "lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations."

Again, Circumcision was a perpetual memorial that righteousness could not be obtained by the works of the law, but by faith in the promised Messiah. Thus the Jews were taught, that if they would be righteous in the sight of God, they must have the faith of their father Abraham. The apostle calls it "a seal of the righteousness of the faith which *he* had being yet uncircumcised; that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also." If Dr. Lightfoot's version of this passage be correct, then the arguments adduced from it in favour of pædobaptism are perfectly fallacious. He renders it, "and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the

righteousness of faith, *which should hereafter be in uncircumcision*. Which *should be*, not which *had been*. Not what had been to Abraham as yet uncircumcised ; but which should be to his seed uncircumcised ; that is, to Gentiles that should hereafter imitate the faith of Abraham.”⁶ This eminent critic shews that circumcision was not a seal of Abraham’s faith and personal righteousness, but of *that righteousness*, which was imputed to him through faith, *prior* to circumcision ; and which should be imputed to the Gentiles also who believed though uncircumcised. This view of the passage agrees with the whole of the apostle’s reasoning. If then this rite was *not* a seal of faith to Abraham who actually believed before he was circumcised, how could it have been such to his natural descendants ? If on the contrary it *was* a seal of Abraham’s faith and righteousness, it must have been so in relation to *himself alone* ; and not to infants of eight days old, who were incapable of believing : neither could it seal *that righteousness* to them which was imputed to those only who believed. To make circumcision therefore, the seal of the righteousness of faith to those who did not believe, implies that they inherited this blessing in virtue of their descent from Abraham, though destitute of his faith ; nor upon any other ground

⁶ Horæ Heb. i Cor. 7, 19.

can an argument be supported from this passage in favour of infant baptism.

Thirdly, The independents assert that circumcision is superseded by baptism, which is in the present dispensation, what circumcision was in the former, the seal of spiritual blessings.

“Circumcision,” says a late pædobaptist writer, “is abolished, baptism is established. What then are the plain, the direct, the legitimate inferences? Circumcision is superseded by baptism. Baptism is under the New Testament, what circumcision was under the old—this is the first inference—the second is, that baptism is to be administered to infants.”⁷

Infant baptism, according to the independents then, rests upon *mere inference* drawn from a supposed analogy between circumcision and baptism. Is not this mode of analogical reasoning contrary to the nature of positive institutions? Is it not a tacit confession, nay a direct proof, that they have no authority from Christ or his apostles, for their practice? When did God authorise the church to establish ordinances upon inferential laws? Is not such a method contrary to the whole economy of his government? The church of Rome, by this process of analogical reasoning, has transplanted nearly all the ceremonies of the old covenant into her

⁷ See Henry Burder's Sermon, p. 12.

worship, till it is become a pseudo-judaic system. And if the *independents infer* that because Abraham circumcised his children, therefore they are to sprinkle their offspring, why may not the *Papists also infer*, that because the Jewish church had a visible head in the person of the high priest, therefore the christian church should have a visible head in the person of the pope; and why may not the *Episcopalians also infer*, that because the priests under the former dispensation received tythes, therefore the ministers of the sanctuary may now demand a tenth of the produce of the land? Is not the inference in these latter instances, at least *as plain, as direct, as legitimate*, as in the former?

But surely analogical evidence, which can never amount to more than possible presumption, or mere probability, should not be admitted as authority in the worship of God; and *we* maintain that no ordinance should be recognized as divinely appointed, upon any evidence, short of demonstrative proof.

As infant baptism, however, is practised and defended upon a supposed analogy between the old, and the new covenant, the more numerous the points of agreement, the stronger will be the evidence in its support; if, on the contrary this analogy be found to be incomplete, the ground on which pædobaptism rests, is proportionally weak. Let us examine the case.

The covenant of circumcision was made with Abraham, and all his seed according to the flesh. The covenant of grace was made with Christ and all his spiritual seed. At the commencement then, here is a discrepancy in the constitution of the two covenants, for they were made with two distinct seeds; and before they can be analogous, Christ, like Abraham, must have a seed according to the flesh.

Abraham was the federal head and representative of a particular nation, a body politic, to whom the old covenant was restricted. Christ is not the head of a politically organised kingdom—his people are not a body politic, nor is the covenant of grace confined to any particular nation.

The covenant of circumcision brought all the Jews into an external and temporal relation to God—the covenant of grace effects no such union; nor are any people politically related to God, merely because the gospel is dispensed among them.

Circumcision was positively enjoined on all the male posterity of Abraham, to identify them as his children—but where is it said, under the new covenant, “ye shall baptise your children in all their generations?” If God had designed the baptism of all infants born under the gospel dispensation, would he have been entirely silent on the subject, when he gave so express a

command to the Jews respecting circumcision? *Could this be established*, then we should not hesitate to say, that the gospel is not so clear and definite in its enactments as the law.

Circumcision was to be administered to males only, and those of every class and condition; and it was not to be dispensed with, under the severest penalty—"he that is born in thy house and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised. The soul that is not circumcised, shall be cut off from his people." Where is baptism commanded to be administered in this indiscriminate way? Is any believer under a solemn obligation to baptise every male in his house, whether converted to God, or not?

Had circumcision been restricted to the *children of believing Jews*, the inference drawn by the independents would be analogical: but the law of the case is against them here—for if circumcision is to be the rule of baptism, then should the latter be administered universally, without respect to moral or spiritual qualifications; because an infant that was born in fornication, and an adult who had no faith, were legitimate subjects of circumcision. Can this be said of baptism? Do the independents themselves maintain this sentiment? If not, the supposed analogy between the two ordinances is destroyed. The churches of Rome and England certainly understand the doctrine of analogy

better than the independents, at least they act more conformably to its spirit: they know that circumcision was a universal national rite, applicable to every man who dwelt in the land of Canaan; and because they believe that baptism supersedes circumcision, they baptise every one within the pale of their respective churches. This is consistent, for it must be allowed, that if indeed circumcision prefigured baptism, there ought to be an agreement between the type and the antitype; and if the one ceremony is to guide us in the administration of the other, the law of the case will be as follows:—

Circumcision was administered universally throughout the land of Canaan—baptism should be administered universally in England, or any other country where the gospel is preached. Only males were circumcised—only males should be baptised. Faith, neither personal nor relative, was a condition of circumcision. Faith as a prerequisite to baptism, should not be required either in the child or in the parent. All children who were circumcised, partook of the passover—all children who are baptised, should receive the Lord's supper. All children who were circumcised, were thenceforth considered members of the Jewish church; and without any subsequent conversion or profession of faith, were entitled to all its privileges—all children who are baptised, should be received

as members of the visible church of Christ, and have a right to *its* privileges, independent of any work of grace, or profession of faith, in their future lives.

Such are the consequences of pursuing this course of analogical reasoning—and if the independents are not prepared to follow it in all its practical results, they had better leave it to papists and episcopalians, and turn unto the word of the Lord.

That the old covenant had a typical meaning, and was a shadow of good things to come, we believe; and we believe also, that the analogical evidence, as it is called, is on our side, when the law of comparison is fairly pursued. Abraham was the head and representative of the Jewish church—Christ is the head and representative of the christian church. Abraham had a numerous seed according to the flesh—Christ has a numerous seed according to the spirit. Abraham, and all his seed were circumcised—Christ was baptised himself, and has commanded his seed to be baptised also. Circumcision introduced the children of Abraham into the Jewish church—baptism introduces the seed of Christ into his visible church. All who were not of Abraham's seed, were aliens, and strangers—all who are not of the seed of Christ, are excluded from the blessings of the covenant of grace.

Having examined the nature, mode, and subjects of baptism, we shall proceed,

Fourthly, to inquire into the design and signification of this ordinance.

In addition to the body of critical and historical evidence that has been produced in favour of *believers' baptism*, we may plead its perfect agreement with the scriptural design of the ordinance. Positive institutions are signs, deriving their use from the end they prefigure; there must necessarily therefore be a similitude between *them*, and the objects which they are intended to represent—for as Austin remarks, “if sacraments bear no resemblance of the things, of which they are sacraments, they are no sacraments at all.” As the design which God had in view in the appointment of positive ordinances, is only to be gathered from an attentive regard to what is revealed concerning them; the laws of their institution should be our guide respecting their true meaning: nor are we at liberty to administer such ordinances for the purpose of accomplishing another design, any more than we are to set aside, or to alter the ordinances themselves. Baptism is a positive institution—baptism then has a precise and important signification; and if we appeal to the New Testament, we shall find that it was intended to be an expressive emblem of the great doctrines of our faith.

That any alteration in the mode of administering gospel ordinances, destroys the analogy between them, and the things they are designed to illustrate, is evidenced in the Romish communion. Christ appointed bread and wine to be taken in remembrance of Him—the bread to be broken, as an emblem of his body broken for us, and the wine to be poured out, as an emblem of his blood shed for our sins.* But what resemblance is there between the wafer of the church of Rome, and the crucifixion of the son of God? Baptism likewise has a spiritual signification; it is an emblematical representation of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection—and of the believer's death unto sin and resurrection to newness of life; but if we substitute sprinkling for immersion, what similitude is there between the sign and the things signified? May we not say in this, as in the case of Romish communion, that the scriptural design of baptism is entirely lost.

This is so obviously true, that there are few among the pædobaptists that have any definite idea of the end which the ceremony answers. And how should they, since there is no correspondence between the sign, *as they practice it*, and the things signified by the ordinance instituted by Jesus Christ. It is upon this principle

* I Cor. ii. 24, 25, 26.

alone, that we can account for the ignorance and contradiction which prevail among the great body of christian professors respecting the design of infant baptism ; and this has led papists, episcopalians, and independents, mutually to recriminate each other, on the ground of some alleged absurdity in their respective views of this subject. Can this be said of us? Are we at a loss to give a scriptural reason for our conduct? Are we divided in opinion respecting the design of baptism? No—nor do we on this account assume to ourselves any superiority of judgment or of perception, for it is the result of adhering to the command of our Lord, and observing the law of his institution: indeed the analogy between baptism and the things signified by it, is so plain and intelligible, that it is readily recognised by all who practice it in its primitive simplicity.

In considering the design and signification of baptism we observe—

1. That it is a solemn act of divine worship, in which the persons baptised profess their faith in that great mystery of revelation—the Triune God.

The words which our Lord commanded his disciples to use in the administration of baptism, “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,” are not a mere form to grace a ceremony, but exhibit an important

truth—a truth which constitutes the basis of the christian revelation, and the only foundation of our hope—the *Triune Jehovah*. To baptise therefore in the name of the sacred Three, is to baptise in the faith of that doctrine the belief of which, forms the distinguishing mark between the christian and the deist. “Ye believe in God,” said our Lord, “believe also in me.”^o And this faith must be produced by the Holy Spirit, for “no man can say (εἰπεῖν) declare or testify that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.”¹ In the ordinance of believers’ baptism, as in the whole of the New Testament, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are represented as executing respective parts in the economy of human redemption, and are recognised by the believer in their several offices: “Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”² And we have fellowship with the Holy Ghost; “the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.”³ The persons whom we baptise, *sincerely desire* to attend to this ordinance from a conviction, founded on an examination of the New Testament, that it is their duty to follow the Lord in the way of his commandments. They publicly avow their faith in the one living and true God—their subjection to his

^o John xiv. 1. ¹ I Cor. xii. 3. ² I John i. 3. ³ Phil. ii. 1. II Cor. xiii. 14. Rom. viii. 16.

authority, and their willingness to devote themselves to the service of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The administration of baptism to *believers* accords with the design of Christ, and with the meaning of the words which he prescribed. They are baptised in the *name of the Father*, and thereby acknowledge one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all. They are baptised in the *name of the Son*, and thereby acknowledge that he is equal with the Father, the Lord of life and glory, the Redeemer of his people, and that they receive him as prophet, priest and king. They are baptised in the *name of the Holy Ghost*, and thereby acknowledge him in all his offices, as the teacher, sanctifier, comforter and preserver of the elect. Thus the baptism of believers is an act of worship in which they profess faith in the one God—Father, Son and Holy Ghost, and solerally devote themselves to the service of the triune Jehovah. Can this be said of infant sprinkling? What declaration of faith, what acknowledgement of God in Christ, what demonstration of the spirit's work is there in this ceremony? Surely pædobaptist ministers cannot even affect to use our Lord's words as expressive of the faith of those whom they sprinkle, because they are not of age to receive the testimony of revelation—neither can they presume to believe that all, or even the greater part of them will

hereafter embrace this testimony. Do they not then adopt them as a *mere form* without any regard to their relative importance or emblematical signification? and would it not be right in them to consider how far such conduct is consistent with the solemnities of religion.

2. The baptism of believers is an outward sign of the work of the Holy Ghost in regeneration.

To be baptised in the name of the Holy Ghost, is to profess that we are the subjects of his regenerating power. Baptism was strictly enjoined upon all who were born of God, and in the days of the apostles they faithfully obeyed the command, hence in after times some mistook the sign for the thing signified, and considered the ordinance as regenerating the subject. This error, which at an early period, had an extensive and fatal influence, is still maintained by the great majority of pædobaptists. In our view, baptism is a symbolical representation of the new birth, and so far from its having any regenerating efficacy, we think that no one has a right to be born of water, who has not been previously born of the spirit. To receive Christ's ordinances is to profess that we have received Christ, and that we acknowledge him as our Lord and master—no man can do this, that is not born of God, therefore regeneration must precede faith, even as faith ought to precede baptism. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ

is born of God.”⁴ “To as many as received him, believing in his name, he granted the privilege of being children of God, who derive their birth not from blood, nor from the desire of the flesh, nor from the will of man, but from God.”⁵ This work of grace is also necessary to a just apprehension of the nature of gospel ordinances, “for the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual discerneth all things.”⁶ Our Lord himself insisted upon this truth in his discourse with Nicodemus; “verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born again, he cannot discern the reign of God.”⁷ This spiritual change is the spring of every act of faith and obedience; and it is our only title to the ordinance of baptism. If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his; and if he be not Christ’s, he can have no right to his institutions. We find in the New Testament that they who were washed, or baptised, were also sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of God.⁸ And are said to be saved by the *washing of regeneration*, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.⁹ The *persons whom*

⁴ I John v. 1. ⁵ John i. 12. 13. See Dr. Campbell’s Translation.

⁶ I Cor. ii. 14. ⁷ See Dr. Campbell’s Translation. ⁸ I Cor. vi. 11.

⁹ Dr. Macknight renders it the *bath of regeneration*, and has the following

we baptise profess to have experienced that renewing of the Holy Ghost, of which this washing is a significant emblem—hereby declaring that they have put off concerning the former conversation the old man which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts, and have put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness: but the *unconscious subjects of pædobaptism* know nothing of the agency of the spirit on their hearts, and the sign, *as administered to them*, fails altogether of illustrating the work of regeneration, of which primitive baptism was undoubtedly a symbolical representation.

3. Baptism is designed to illustrate the purifying nature of the blood of Christ. The scriptures proclaim the entire pollution of man, and the absolute necessity of the blood of Christ to remove his guilt. Baptism by immersion is a striking illustration of these important truths—the persons whom we baptise profess to feel a deep and humbling conviction of their utter sinfulness, and they desire to be

remarks upon this passage. “*Through baptism*, called the bath of regeneration, not because any change in the nature of the baptised person is produced by baptism, but because it is an emblem of the purification of the soul from sin. Hence Ananias, in allusion to the emblematical meaning of baptism, said to our Apostle, (Acts xxii. 16.) ‘arise, and be baptised, and wash away thy sins.’ Be baptised in token of thy resolution to forsake thy sins. The real change in a believer which entitles him to be called a Son of God, is not effected by baptism, but by the *renewing of the Holy Ghost*, mentioned in the next clause. Hence our Lord, whom the Apostle has followed here, joined the two together, in his discourse to Nicodemus; John iii. 5. Except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” See Notes on Titus iii. 5.

washed in the laver of baptism, as a lively emblem of their having been washed in the fountain which is opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness. It is on account of its symbolical meaning, that we find baptism so frequently spoken of as taking away sin—Peter, when addressing those Jews, who were converted under his ministry, commanded them to be baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus, for the remission of sins ;¹ not that he believed, that the application of water to their bodies could remove their moral defilement, but because baptism exhibits an impressive image of that purification by the blood of Christ, which they enjoyed through faith in his name. This he shews in his epistle, where he says, “ when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was preparing, wherein few, that is eight souls, were saved by water. To which water, the antitype baptism, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God), now saveth us also through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”² The death of Christ for the sanctification of his people, is more forcibly set forth by immersion than it can be by any other mode. Our highest idea of natural purification arises from an

¹ Acts ii. 28. ² 1 Peter iii. 21. See Macknight's Translation.

immersion of the whole body in water; surely therefore this mode must be the most appropriate figure to illustrate the purity of the saints, who are said to “be washed from their sins in the blood of Christ.”³ Sprinkling might be a suitable representation of that imperfect purification which obtained under the law, but it by no means expresses the sanctification of believers under the gospel, of whom it is said, that “Christ gave himself for them that he might sanctify and cleanse them with the *washing of water* by the word.”⁴

That baptism was designed to be an emblem of the sanctification of believers through the blood of Christ, is a truth admitted by pædobaptists. Dr. Boys says, “the dipping in holy baptism has three parts; the putting into the water, the continuance in the water, and the coming out of the water. The putting into the water, doth ratify the mortification of sin by the power of Christ’s death, as Paul—“know ye not that all we, which have been baptised into Jesus Christ, have been baptised into his death, and that our old man is crucified with him?”⁵ The continuance in the water, notes the burial of sin; to wit, a continual increase of mortification by the power of Christ’s death and burial.⁶ The coming out of the water, figured

³ Rev. i. 5.—vii. 14. ⁴ Eph. v. 25, 26, 27. ⁵ Rom. vi. 3. ⁶ Rom. vi. 4.

our spiritual resurrection and vivification to newness of life, by the power of Christ's resurrection." ⁷ Tilenus also observes, that "the ceremony in baptism is three-fold: immersion into the water, a continuance under the water, and a rising out of the water. The internal and essential form of baptism is no more than that analogical proportion of the signs, already explained, with the things signified. For as it is a property of water to wash away the filth of the body; so it represents the power of Christ's blood in the cleansing from sin. Thus immersion into the water declares, by the most agreeable analogy, the mortification of the old man; and emersion out of the water the vivification of the new man." ⁸ Thus according to pædobaptists themselves, our mode is the only one that is consistent with the scriptural meaning of the ordinance.

4. Baptism is a lively emblem of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

As these truths constitute the only foundation on which our hope is built, they form prominent parts of the gospel revelation, and it is evidently the design of baptism to present us with an emblematical illustration of them.

When our Lord submitted himself to this ordinance, his immersion in the water, typically

⁷Dr. Boys' Works, p. 294. Edit. 1629. ⁸See Booth's Pædo. Exam. Vol. i. p. 158.

represented his death and burial ; his rising up out of the water, and the spirit resting upon him, strikingly prefigured his resurrection from the dead, his ascension to the throne of his glory, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, as the first fruit of his intercession.

The element in which he was immersed was an emblem of that dreadful abyss of divine justice in which he was overwhelmed ; and like a drowning man, he sunk under the waters of deep affliction—"save me, O God ; for the waters are come in unto my soul : I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing : I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me."⁹ In the prospect of this woeful scene of distress his soul being in an agony he exclaimed, "I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished !"

The baptism of believers also is designed to keep in view the important facts of the sufferings and triumphs of the Son of God. This the apostle clearly shews—"know ye not, that so many of us as were baptised into Jesus Christ were baptised into his death ? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death ; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been

⁹ Psalm lxi. 1, 2.

planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.”¹

And again, “buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him, through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.” These expressions, *buried with him in baptism—wherein ye are risen with him*—so decidedly favour immersion, that independent of the signification of the ordinance, they are of themselves sufficient to decide the *mode*. Bishop Hoadly declares that if baptism had been performed by the apostles, as it is now by the pædobaptists, we should never have heard of this form of speech.²

But it is asserted by some in our day, that we labour under an egregious mistake respecting the meaning of this passage—for that the apostle is not speaking of the *mode*, but of the *design* of the ordinance—which is the death and resurrection of Christ; and that so long as *this design is kept in view*, pouring or even sprinkling is as valid as immersion. *That man* must be strangely warped by prejudice, who will venture such an opinion, in opposition to the plain meaning of the words, and the universal consent of the most able expositors.³ But in point of fact, the apostle is not only speaking of the emblematical

¹ Rom. vi. 3, 4, 5. ² See his Works, Vol. 3. p. 890. ³ See Grotius, Whitby, Macknight, Hammond, Burkit, Dr. Wells, all of them pædobaptists, on this subject.

relation of baptism to the death and resurrection of Christ, but also of the obligations it imposes upon the baptised—he therefore necessarily refers to the mode, as exemplifying the ends which should follow, in the believer's life and conversation. He says, we are *buried in baptism* and are *raised up again*, that we should walk in newness of life. Here the *mode of baptism* is specified, and the *end* which should succeed it pointed out; and we trace without difficulty the analogy between the sign and the thing signified—but what emblematical representation does sprinkling afford of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ? What sign does it exhibit that the infant is dead unto sin and alive unto God? Would he not remain for ever a stranger to the fact of his having received this ceremony, unless told of it—how then can it furnish him with motives to future holiness of life?

The spiritual signification of baptism is so entirely obscured by the substitution of sprinkling in the place of immersion, that many learned pædobaptists have been of opinion that immersion should be restored. No one has expressed sentiments more decided on this subject, than Dr. Wall—he says, “the immersion of the person (whether infant or adult) in the posture of one that is buried, and raised up again, is much more solemn, and expresses the

design of the sacrament, and the mystery of the spiritual washing much better, than pouring a small quantity of water on the face; and that pouring of water is much better than sprinkling, or dropping a drop of water on it.”⁴ Again, when addressing the clergy he says, “to those who use sprinkling instead of dipping, or even of pouring water, (which last is enjoined by our church even in the weakest child’s case) I would humbly represent the consideration of the duty of obedience which they owe, not only to the rulers of the church to which they have promised to conform; but also and chiefly to *our Saviour himself, whose word of command is, baptise.* I wish they would study the notion and emphasis of that word. We are forced to some pains in defence of our practice against those who pretend that it does necessarily and absolutely include dipping in its signification—I think we must not, and *cannot deny* that it includes washing in its signification. They will do well to consider whether they shall be able to justify before our Saviour, that a drop, or a sprinkle or two, of water, can be so fairly understood to be a washing of a person, in his sense.”⁵ Venema maintains that “washing is neither the only, nor the principal idea connected with the ordinance; but more truly that of

⁴ See Def. of Inf. Bap. p. 405. ⁵ Idem, p. 407.

suffocating, and of producing death on the flesh, seems to be intended, not only as an effect which water produces, but because the apostle asserts it in express words.”⁶

This opinion is also maintained by that eminent biblical critic Schleusner. When stating the metaphorical signification of the expression *συνθάπτεσθαι τῷ Χριστῷ*. To be buried with Christ, he says, “ the origin of this singular mode of speaking, which is peculiar to the books of the New Testament, must be sought for in baptism, which in the apostolic churches was performed by immersion. For submersion which was formerly used in baptism on account of its similitude to a burial, (because the whole body of the person baptised, which was immersed in water or a river, was as if buried in a sepulchre) not only had this signification, that it might represent the death of Christ ; but by the same symbolical rite the baptised were understood to profess and to promise, that they were willing in future, after the likeness and resemblance of the death of Christ, to renounce all wickedness ; and even to suffer death for the sake of the christian religion, as Christ gave up his life for the sake of the truth : and as the body which was immersed in water at baptism, again emerged or was raised out of the water, by this

⁶ Venemæ Dissertat. Sac. l. 2. c. 14 Sect. 9.

symbolical rite was represented the resurrection of Christ, the hope of the future resurrection of the dead; and men were admonished that the whole purpose of life should be regulated by the doctrines and examples of Christ.”⁷

Thus are our opinion and practice defended by learned pædobaptists; very many of whom, maintain, as firmly as we can, that baptism is intended to exhibit the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ; and that *immersion is absolutely essential to the symbolical representation of these facts*—with what propriety this is denied by the advocates of pædobaptism at the present day, it remains with them to shew—it is something in our favour, that we have the testimony of the most eminent of their body, on our side in this particular.

5. Baptism is intended to illustrate the believer’s spiritual conformity to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

That spiritual change, of which only the believer is the subject, and which constitutes him a new creature⁸ is prefigured in the ordinance of baptism; “for as many of you as have been baptised into Christ, have put on Christ.” Here the apostle shews that baptism was the outward sign of spiritual conformity to Christ; and the whole of his reasoning in the 6th chapter of

⁷ Vide Lex. Nov. Test. sub voce *Συμβάπτω*. ⁸ II Cor. v. 17.

Romans is founded on this union and communion of believers with Christ. He begins by saying that *we are dead to sin*, and that *we are buried with Christ by baptism into his death*—being thus dead and buried with Christ in baptism, *we are free from sin.*⁹ He then proceeds to point out our spiritual conformity to his resurrection, and our consequent communion with him in newness of life. “Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”¹ The great mystery of our union to Christ is here unfolded—*He*, as the head of the body, and the first fruits of them that sleep, is represented as having comprehended all the elect in the death and resurrection of his body; and *they*, by their interest in his vicarious sufferings, are represented as dying in his death, and rising in his resurrection—his death being a complete satisfaction for their sins, and his resurrection the certain pledge and pattern of their own. Here also we have the mystery of the Christian life explained. *That life* which we

⁹ See verses 2, 4, 7. ¹ See verses 8, 9, 10, 11.

live by the faith of the Son of God, and which is said to be hid with Christ in God. The apostle describes it as consisting of two things—dying unto sin, and living unto holiness.

Our *dying unto sin* is prefigured in our being immersed in water; “ye are buried with him by baptism, likewise reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin.” This expression may not only signify our freedom from the dominion of sin that we should no longer live under it; but our having endured the punishment due on account of it, by virtually suffering and dying with Christ as our great surety. Thus all the elect were included in Christ’s death, and his death was imputed to them as though they had suffered the penalty which the law enacted, and they are consequently regarded as just in the sight of God “for he that is dead *δεδικαιωται* is justified from sin.”²

Again, *our living unto holiness*, is prefigured by our rising out of the water; “that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we should walk in newness of life.”

Baptism is an apt illustration of these things; and the subjects of this ordinance confess that they were born in sin, and that they were the willing servants of iniquity; but that they have

² Verse 7.

put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.³

6. Baptism prefigures the death of the believer's body, and his resurrection to eternal life.

We have shewn that baptism is an emblem of death—of the death of Christ for the sins of his people, and of the believer's death unto sin : we shall now shew that it points to the final dissolution of the body. In this view of the ordinance it possesses indeed much practical utility, teaching us that we must shortly lay aside this frail and degraded tabernacle, which is so opposed in the tendencies of its very nature to the enjoyments which the spirit seeks in communion with Christ. “ For we that are in this tabernacle do groan being burdened ; not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.” The believer sees in baptism, a lively figure of the putting off his earthly tabernacle—he realises in this ordinance, the burial of his body in the dust of the earth, when the indwelling of sin will be destroyed, and he will be for ever freed from all those corruptions which at present war against his soul—“ for he that is dead is free from sin.”

³ Col. iii. 10.

Having thus passed through death in a figure, he is taught the necessity of praying and watching with all perseverance—he is stimulated to activity in the ways of the Lord ; to the diligent performance of all his revealed will—to the patient endurance of the inflictions of his righteous providence ; and he lives in the habitual expectation of his last change ; having his loins girt about, and his lamp burning, and his hope in exercise that he shall be found of *his Lord* in peace !

The believer's descent into the water at baptism does not more forcibly exhibit the humiliation of his body when he shall return to his original dust, than his rising again out of the water prefigures the final and complete victory which he shall obtain over death in the morning of the resurrection, by virtue of his union to Christ.

We have the sentence of death in ourselves, our bodies must undergo a change before they can participate in the joys of the heavenly world ; but our future felicity is not the less secure, because the circumstances of our nature require that our flesh should see corruption. He who hath enstamped his image upon the hearts of his people, will also set his seal upon their graves ; and will give his angels charge to watch their sleeping dust ; and he shall call in the morning and they shall come

forth with joy and singing; for “he will have a desire to the work of his own hands.”

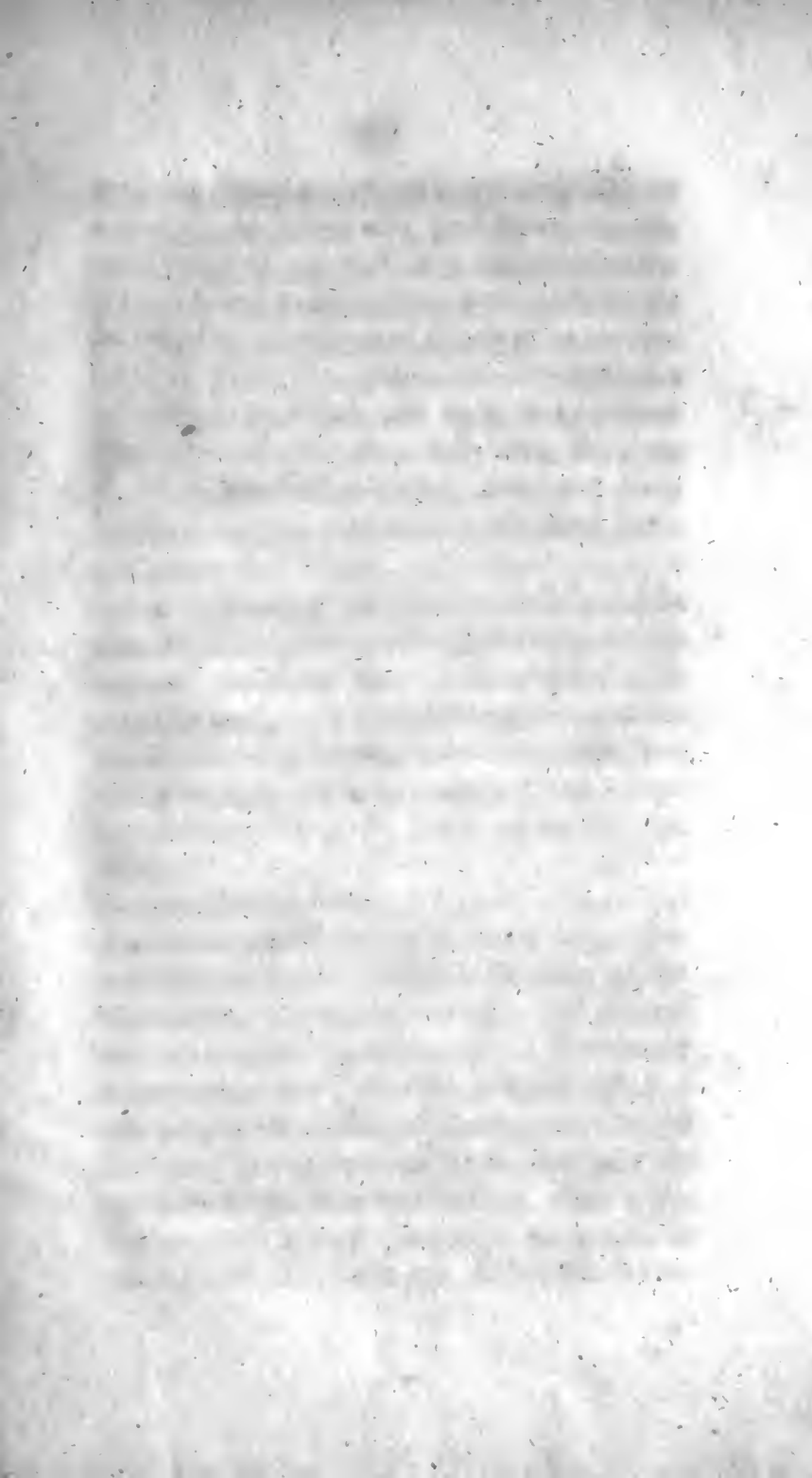
Does the ordinance of baptism exhibit these important and consolatory truths? Does it evince our faith in the Triune Jehovah—does it set forth the work of the spirit and the purifying efficacy of the blood of Christ—does it illustrate his bitter sufferings, deep humiliation, and complete triumph over sin and death—does it enforce a spiritual conformity to his example—does it prefigure our death, and direct our hopes to that blissful period, when these bodies shall rise to immortality in the perfect likeness of their Redeemer? What manner of persons then ought *we* to be, in all holy conversation and godliness, who profess to believe these truths, to enjoy these privileges, and to anticipate this blessedness!

While we conscientiously observe this ordinance, as an act of our Lord’s divine authority, and an evidence of his consummate wisdom and goodness—while we zealously defend it from the false glosses, which the ignorance of some, and the perverse reasonings of others have cast over it—let us be solicitous to deduce from it for ourselves, at least some of the many spiritual lessons it is designed to teach us—and since we know by experience, that while we practice it in scriptural simplicity, even pædobaptist professors will unite with men of the

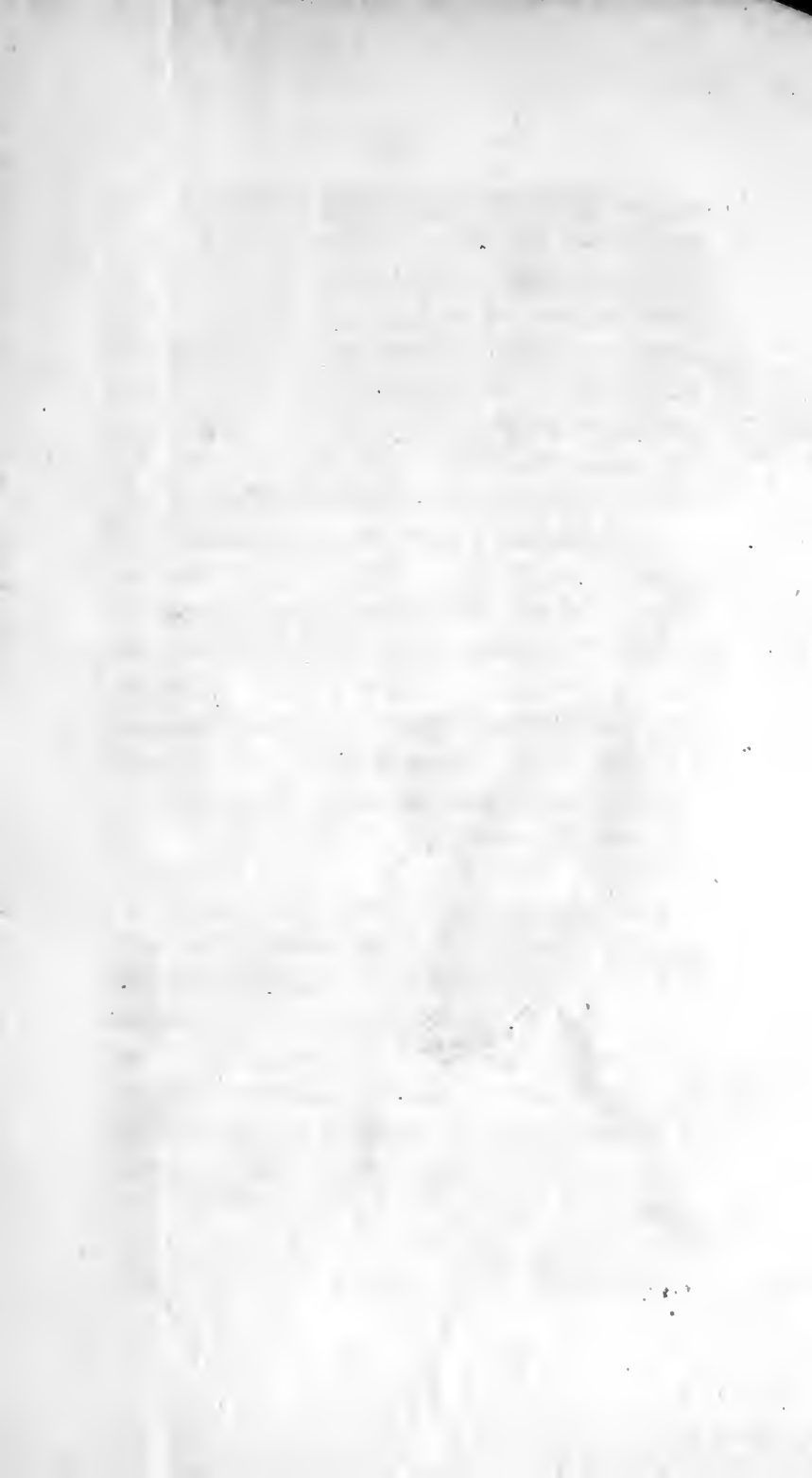
world in branding us with reproach—let us endeavour to adorn our profession, by the consistency of our walk and conversation ;—to cherish and exercise those graces which are the brightest ornaments of the christian character ;—to enjoy the consolations the gospel is calculated to afford, and to wait in patient expectation of ultimately beholding the glory of the Triune God,—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

F I N I S .

would in founding us with respect—It is
 essential to admit our position, for the
 consistency of our faith and conversation—
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 the King of Kings, and the
 Lord of Lords.



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